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The Mental Health Education Integration Consortium (MHEDIC): A Community of Practice Working to Advance School Mental Health

D. Anderson-Butcher

Mark D. Weist

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Publication Info

Published in *The Community Psychologist*, Volume 44, Issue 4, 2011, pages 23-25.

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Anderson-Butcher, D. & Weist, M. D. (2011). The Mental Health Education Integration Consortium (MHEDIC): A community of practice working to advance school mental health. *The Community Psychologist*, 44(4), 23-25.

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THE *Community Psychologist*

A PUBLICATION OF THE SOCIETY FOR COMMUNITY RESEARCH AND ACTION

Fall 2011

Division 27 of the American Psychological Association

Vol. 44 No. 4

From the President

Jim Cook

**University of North Carolina,
Charlotte**



How can we, as a Society, become more effective and be more successful? How can we unleash the collective power of our

Society to make a difference in society, advance our discipline, and promote the professional growth and development of our members? In our current organizational structure, we have an executive committee (EC), two councils (education and practice), a regional network coordinator with regional coordinators in five regions in the United States (U.S.) and five regions around the world, 11 committees, and 13 interest groups. How can we use this structure to our best advantage?

To increase our ability to be successful, we need to:

1. Set clear goals for SCRA and for each of the subunits within it.

What do we want to look like as

an organization in five to ten years? If we don't have a shared vision of where we want to go, we're not likely to get there. Because of Ann Bogat's work negotiating a contract with Springer for SCRA's ownership of the *American Journal of Community Psychology*, we have a long-term contract that has put us in the best financial shape ever. So let's develop a vision of what we can be. Let's dream a bit, imagine a better reality, and decide what we want our future to be. Then let's figure out how to get there.

The EC will be going through some strategic planning to set some goals for the Society, develop strategies for accomplishing them, and developing some benchmarks for assessing our progress. We'll be asking all our councils, committees and interest groups to do the same, and to provide regular reports to the EC and the membership regarding their progress. In addition, we're working to ensure that the EC does a better job of communicating with our membership and our units, to help ensure that the goals of the Society and its subunits align.

2. Help all of our units to become more active, engaging, and effective.

I've had the pleasure of serving on the Community Psychology Practice Council (CPPC) for

several years. Many would agree that the CPPC has become the most engaging, active, productive unit within our Society. Starting as a small handful of people interested in promoting the practice of community psychology, the CPPC has an email list of 95 (and growing), had 25 at their breakfast meeting at the biennial, and typically has 15 to 20 people on the phone engaged in monthly conference calls. Accomplishments include creation of the *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice*, development of an edited book on community psychology practice, creation of a practice blog, a joint project with the Council on Education Programs to help improve graduate training, a "Value Proposition" to help define what community psychologists are and what we can do, a mini-grant program, a publication award, and a partnership with the Idealist organization to promote graduate training in community psychology. The CPPC has also had a major impact on the programs of the last two biennial conferences. Through these accomplishments, members of the CPPC have grown, and SCRA and our broader society have benefited. Let's learn from their success and help all of our units become similarly effective.

How has the CPPC accomplished so much? Some have

Contents: Fall 2011

1 From the President

3 From the Editor

5 The Community Practitioner and Education Connection

Edited by Susan Wolfe
and Jim Dalton

10 Disabilities Action

Edited by Kendra Liljenquist
and Erin Stack

12 Environment & Justice

Edited by Manuel Riemer

13 International

Edited by Mitsuru Ikeda

16 Public Policy

Edited by Judah Viola

18 Regional Update

Edited by Susan Dvorak McMahon

25 Rural Issues

Edited by Susana Helm
and Cecile Lardon

22 School Intervention Interest Group

Edited by Paul Flaspohler
and Melissa Maras

26 Special Section

Edited by Maria Chun

29 Student Issues

Edited by Todd Bottom

31. The Community Student

Edited by Todd Bottom
and Jessica Fernandez

34 SCRA Membership Application

attributed its success to the leadership of Tom Wolff and Greg Meissen. While their sustained leadership has been important, there are several other factors that Greg and Tom (and I) see as critical to their success. These strategies are ones that can certainly be adopted by any group:

- a. Regular scheduled phone meetings, at the same time each month;
- b. Clear agendas, with specific tasks that individuals commit to do;
- c. Minutes, distributed quickly after each meeting, listing each commitment;
- d. Reminders prior to meetings, sent to the SCRA listserv;
- e. Regular and active recruitment of new members on the listserv;
- f. Orientation of new members;
- g. Active encouragement of members to take on tasks, with support;
- h. Collaborative task/workgroups with clear, doable goals and tasks; and
- i. Strong involvement of students in all aspects of the group.

This last point deserves some additional comment. I've been highly impressed with many of the students who have been involved with the Practice and Education councils and the EC. Students have assumed responsibility for major tasks in these groups, and have demonstrated clear leadership. Their contributions have been substantial, and they have gained immensely from their involvement. All of our units need to ensure that our student members are welcomed, supported, and engaged.

Because our subunits are so important for SCRA's success, I spent some time before and during the Biennial talking with chairs of some of our committees and interest groups, to encourage them to increase their aspirations for their groups, and to offer whatever help we can provide to enable them to be successful. I'll be following up, to see how we can help.

Already, the Environment and Justice group has taken some steps to expand its scope, and I look forward to seeing it and other groups take off!

3. Provide administrative support to keep us moving and to help us assess our progress.

The EC has begun to examine our administrative structures and we believe that we need to hire staff to help us coordinate our efforts. We are currently contracting with AMC Source for membership services, and we have decided to provide additional professional event planning support for the next Biennials, to take some of the burden off of the local planning committees. We also recognize the need for additional staff support to ensure that we move forward to accomplish our goals. We have some clear tasks we need to accomplish (e.g., membership, editing *The Community Psychologist*, Biennial support, and many others) and we are looking at the administrative structures needed for these tasks and other priorities we identify in our strategic planning. Possible components of this structure include an Executive Director, expanding the contract with AMC Source, contracting with other "event planners" for the Biennial, or some combination of contractual arrangements. Consistent with our strategic plan, we need to ensure we're meeting our organizational needs while being fiscally responsible.

SCRA has a large pool of talented, energetic members. Through a clearer delineation of our goals, strategic planning, better coordination of our activities, and improved follow through, I'm confident we can grow and do even more amazing things. We welcome your input as we move ahead, and we'll keep you informed of our progress.

Certainly feel free to contact me if you have any questions, concerns or ideas, at jcook@uncc.edu.

Jim 

From the Editor

Maria B.J. Chun,
University of Hawai'i at Manoa



In Remembrance. I start writing this column on the eve of the 10th Anniversary of 9/11. For those of my Generation (X), it has been described as our defining moment – when our perceived peaceful existence had been literally and figuratively shattered to bits on a Tuesday morning. I remember that day very clearly, particularly because the day prior was one filled with happiness. I had celebrated my 34th

birthday with my coworkers at the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, and we had also launched an updated version of a statewide regulatory reform project we had been working hard on. I had said to our public relations person: “Thank goodness today is such a slow news day.” We had landed some time on the evening news of several local television stations. Then, less than 24 hours later, one of the most newsworthy events in American history jammed every media outlet available.

I woke up on 9/11/01 at 5 a.m. as usual. As I was getting ready for work, I placed my 9 month old son, Evan, in front of the TV to watch a Baby Einstein video (it happened to be Baby Van Gogh this time) to keep him occupied. When the video ended, I glanced over from the kitchen and I saw the image of the Twin Towers in flames with smoke billowing out, just prior to the collapse. Peter Jennings was stating that the U.S. had been subjected to a terrorist attack. It didn't register. I thought it must be some old movie trailer. Then, I walked over and switched channels several times. At that point, the images were on every station; it was real.

Although my parents usually babysat my son during the day, I decided to bring Evan with me to work. As we entered the elevator to the State Capitol, everyone I ran into looked somber and asked if I knew what had happened. I said yes and proceeded to my office in a zombie-like state with Evan smiling and comfortably sitting in his baby sack, without a clue as to what had just occurred. I thought to myself that maybe it was actually a good thing -- although he would never be able to enjoy the perceived safety me and my cohorts had believed we were entitled to, his reality would be what would unfold – that is, if you've never had something, you would not know it was missing. I don't know whether that is true or false, good or bad, but that is what I thought at the time. Evan, now known as a “9/11 baby” because he was born in 2001, still has no true understanding about the impact of the

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INTEREST GROUPS

AGING

The Aging Interest Group focuses on the productive role of aging in the community and the prevention of mental health problems in the elderly.

Chair: Margaret M. Hastings,
(847) 256-4844
margaretmhastings@earthlink.net

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

The Children, Youth & Families Interest Group facilitates the interests of child and adolescent development in high risk contexts, especially the effect of urban poverty and community structures on child and family development.

Chair: Richard N. Roberts, (435) 797-3346

COMMUNITY ACTION

The Community Action Interest Group explores the roles and contributions of people working in applied community psychology settings.

Chair: Bradley Olson, (773) 325-4771

COMMUNITY HEALTH

The Community Health Interest Group focuses on health promotion, disease prevention, and health care service delivery issues as they relate to the community.

Co-chairs: David Lounsbury, (415) 338-1440
dlounsbu@aecom.yu.edu;
Shannon Gwin Mitchell, (202) 719-7812
sgwinmitchell@gmail.com

DISABILITIES

The Disabilities Interest Group promotes understanding of the depth and diversity of disabilities issues in the community that are ready for research and action, and influences community psychologists' involvement in policy and practices that enhance self determination, personal choice, and full inclusion in the community for people with disabilities.

Co-Chairs: Kendra Liljenquist,
ksliljen@bu.edu;
Erin Stack, *erinestack@gmail.com*

ENVIRONMENT & JUSTICE

The Environment & Justice Interest Group is focused on research and action related to global climate change and environmental degradation. With a focus on environmental justice, particularly how environmental change affects and often perpetuates social inequality, this group explores the role community psychology can and should play in understanding in these urgent changes to our ecology.

Chair: Courte Voorhees, (505) 306-7323

INDIGENOUS

The Indigenous Interest Group is hosted by the Australian, New Zealand and Pacific branch of the Society for Community Research and Action. The aims of this group are interrelated. Firstly, it wants to support SCRA members who are conducting indigenous research by providing a forum for the exchange of ideas, literature and experience. This will assist the Group's more specific focus which is to utilize our combined resources more effectively to conduct strengths-based praxis towards raising public awareness of the plight

of indigenous people and addressing the social justice issues they face in oppressive dominant societies.

Co-chairs: Brian Bishop,
B.Bishop@curtin.edu.au;
Lizzie Finn, *l.finn@curtin.edu.au*

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, & TRANSGENDER (LGBT)

The LGBT Interest Group increases awareness of the need for community research and action related to issues that impact LGBT people, and serves as a mechanism for communication, collaboration, and support among community psychologists who are either interested in research/service/policy related to LGBT people and communities, and/or who identify as LGBT.

Co-chairs: Richard Jenkins,
jenkinsr@nida.nih.gov;
Maria Valente, *valent60@msu.edu*

ORGANIZATION STUDIES

The Organization Studies Interest Group is a community of scholars who are interested in community psychology themes (e.g., empowerment, ecological analysis, prevention, sense of community) in organizational contexts, and in importing organization studies concepts, methods, models, and theories into community psychology.

Chair: Neil Boyd, (717) 512-3870
Boyd@Lycoming.edu

PREVENTION & PROMOTION

The Prevention & Promotion Interest Group seeks to enhance development of prevention and promotion research, foster active dialogue about critical conceptual and methodological action and implementation issues, and promote rapid dissemination and discussion of new developments and findings in the field.

Co-chairs: Monica Adams,
madams8@depaul.edu;
Derek Griffith, *derekmg@umich.edu*

RURAL

The Rural Interest Group is devoted to highlighting issues of the rural environment that are important in psychological research, service, and teaching.

Co-Chairs: Susana Helm,
helms@dop.hawaii.edu
Cécile Lardon, (909) 474-5781
c.lardon@uaf.edu

SCHOOL INTERVENTION

The School Intervention Interest Group addresses theories, methods, knowledge base, and setting factors pertaining to prevention and health promotion in school.

Co-chairs: Paul Flaspohler,
flaspodp@muohio.edu;
Melissa Maras, *marasme@missouri.edu*

SELF-HELP/ MUTUAL SUPPORT

The Self-Help/Mutual Support Interest Group is an international organization of researchers, self-help leaders, and policy makers that promotes research and action related to self-help groups and organizations.

Chair: Louis Brown, *ldb12@psu.edu*

events – he has always known to remove his footwear, not carry on more than 2 ounces of liquid, and now potentially be subjected to a full body scan, when going through airport security. For me, my husband, and “our generation,” it was a huge wake up call. Friends from other countries who had been subjected to terrorist attacks and had always lived under a cloud of fear, empathized, but also noted: “Now you know what it’s like.”

How true. And, I think such a statement would be particularly resonant for a community psychologist. Because of our collaborative and multidisciplinary perspective, we would not only do our best to understand or attempt to “know what it’s like,” but would be able to assist immediately and long term, ground level and big picture. A number of the articles in this issue of the TCP clarify our continued progress toward not just maintaining, but furthering our identity and role in the world. Our President’s column calls us to action in specific ways and also provides us with very clear steps on how to keep SCRA and community psychology growing strong. A special article on Clifford O’Donnell’s transition into emeritus status provides us with both a historical and current perspective on the field. As always, our Practice and Student columns provide numerous ideas, opportunities, and invitations for involvement and outreach.

We also welcome the return of the Rural Interest Group Column with column editors Susana Helm and Cecile Lardon. And, we are also learning of the potential revival of several other interest groups. The call to action has clearly been heard and people are gearing up their forces. This flurry of activity has been most clearly evident with many groups requesting times on the SCRA conference line to conduct conference calls with their members.

Tragedies like 9/11 and natural disasters, such as the Earthquake this past Spring in Japan, make the role of community psychologists and community psychology even more apparent. We must always be prepared to deal with the unexpected. We should not let it weigh us down with worry, but we should be cognizant of ways to prevent events from occurring, if possible. And, if an intervention is needed, we must be ready to act with our arsenal of community psychology tools.

I finish writing this column on the morning of 9/11/11. Evan is now 10 and enjoying 5th grade and is preparing to take his SSAT exam in a few weeks. He sometimes asks me about 9/11 and I tell him about how he came to work with me that day and “what life was like” before that day. He just smiles at me like a child would at an older person who is reminiscing about “how things used to be in my day.” His sister, Emma, who is 7, asks me why she didn’t get to come with me to work that day, too. Her brother quickly snaps: “It’s because you weren’t born yet, silly.” I close the column with the hope that my generation (X) can help their generation (Z?) to always be mindful of what had occurred, but to also have optimism and hope. 🌍

The Community Practitioner and Education Connection

***Edited by Susan Wolfe
and Jim Dalton***

Community psychology practice is something we all do, every time that we collaborate with citizens to make the world a better place. Community psychology practice – what it means, its process, how it can be learned – is an important concern for all of us.

There is a growing sense in SCRA that now is the time to articulate

a working definition of what we mean by the practice of community psychology, and to integrate that vision more fully into how we train our graduate students. That sense was palpable at a plenary session and several other sessions at the biennial in June, and has been growing for some time among members of the SCRA Practice Council and Council on Education Programs. In this joint presentation of the Community Practitioner and Education Connection columns, several authors – full-time practitioners, graduate faculty and graduate students – articulate their perspectives and pathways for moving forward. This commentary was originally presented as a plenary session at the SCRA Biennial.

The ongoing conversation on practice is spirited and inspiring. It reflects multiple perspectives and approaches to training. A growing cross-section of our field is participating. Read the commentaries below. Feel free enter our conversation by contacting either column editor:

Jim Dalton, Education Connection,
jdalton@bloomu.edu

Susan Wolfe, Community Practitioner,
susan.wolfe@susanwolfeandassociates.net

The Future of Community Psychology Training and Education for Practice

***Written by Greg Meissen
and Sharon Hakim,
Wichita State University***

We wanted to “take the pulse” of those SCRA Members at the well-attended Biennial in Chicago for all of us to see. The plenary session began with instructions to “Stand if the Answer is YES” to the question: “Who here was exposed to a definition of community psychology as part of your education?” Virtually everyone in the audience stood. Definitions of

community psychology ranging from the Swampscott Conference in 1965 through the just released 3rd edition of *Community Psychology: Linking Individual and Communities* by Kloos, Hill, Thomas, Wandersman, Elias, and Dalton (2011). The follow-up question of “Who here was exposed to a definition of community psychology practice as part of your education?” had only a handful of individuals left standing. David Julian’s (2006) definition of community practice, “*to strengthen the capacity of communities to meet the needs of constituents and help them to realize their dreams in order to promote well-being, social justice, economic equity and self-determination through systems, organizational, and/or individual change*” was then presented, and it was noted that it is the only definition of community psychology practice.

In an effort to go deeper, the additional questions asked included: “Who here believes they were well-prepared to practice community psychology upon graduation or are being well-prepared if currently in graduate school?” and “Who here believes that our graduate programs teach a core set of community psychology practice skills and competencies?” Hardly anyone was left standing. The audience was surprised, but we were not, as what we saw was consistent with data that had been collected over the previous five years. There are a number of implications.

So why are these questions being asked here and now? And why were they presented in a plenary? First, they are the result of a joint undertaking between the Community Psychology Practice Council and Council of Education Programs that is focused on education and training for careers in community psychology practice. Data that have been collected since 2005 have indicated there is a need to do so, as the majority of community psychology graduates go into practice

and do not become members of or retain membership in SCRA.

This issue affects all community psychologists. It is critical for the growth, development and identity of the field, which most powerfully impacts our students and recent graduates. There is currently no agreed upon set of competencies or skills for practice, definition for practice, or method of education for practice careers. Some doctoral programs do not address the practice of community psychology at all. The result has been a loss of practitioners among the current SCRA membership. Many leave the organization to affiliate with other practice-based professional associations that are relevant to the areas in which they choose to work such as the American Evaluation Association or the American Public Health Association.

The goals of this Biennial plenary were to catalyze the thinking among all who attended about:

1. a definition of community psychology practice;
2. the necessary competencies to be called a community psychologist;
3. potential unified standards or agreed up guidelines for education of community psychologists; and
4. the development of a market for community psychology practitioners.

For those of you who were not at the Biennial, we are introducing these issues to you in this column. For everyone reading this, we invite you to join the SCRA Practice Council and the CEP as we work on them together.



History Leading up to this Plenary Session

Written by Tom Wolff,
Tom Wolff and Associates

The roots of this session go back to the 2005 Biennial in Urbana and the SCRA Community Visioning process that led to a modified vision for SCRA. “*The Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) will have a strong, global impact on enhancing well-being and promoting social justice for all people by fostering collaboration where there is division and empowerment where there is oppression.*”

Out of the visioning process a small group (that quickly grew) began having monthly calls on issues of community psychology practice. This

The more we pursued community psychology practice, the more we realized how little we knew about the state of practice and practice training in our field

was the first time in the history of community psychology that a group met consistently to focus on practice. Those monthly calls continue to this day, six years later, and generally have 15 to 20 members of the Practice Council on the call (one-third of our members are graduate and undergraduate students).

We started with the basics – defining community psychology practice – and brought a draft to the First International Conference of Community Psychology in Puerto Rico. At that meeting the participants helped us refine our definition which then was published by David Julian in the TCP in 2006.

The more we pursued community psychology practice, the more we realized how little we knew about the state of practice and practice training in our field. We developed a survey on practice to gather information (Francisco, Cook, Brunson, & Hazel, 2008). We then decided it was time to pull SCRA together around Practice, so with the help of Carolyn Swift we planned and conducted the first ever Summit on Community Psychology Practice at Pasadena in 2007. The Summit was a huge success with over 100 people coming a day early to the Biennial.

Emerging from the Pasadena Summit were the following three directions that remain our foci to this day, four years later:

- 1. Publications** – *The Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice*, edited by Vince Francisco, launched in one and a half years from idea to first issue, and a new book proposal for a volume on *Foundations of Community Psychology Practice*, edited by Susan Wolfe and Victoria Chien;
- 2. Training/education** – We collaborated with the Council on Education programs on a second survey with a focus on training for competencies for practice. The results were presented at the 2009 Biennial in Montclair (Dziadkowiec & Jimenez, 2009). This plenary session continues our partnership with CEP. In 2008, the Lisbon International CP conference included a session “Training CP for Practice” from an international perspective including Australia, Puerto Rico, Italy, and Portugal;
- 3. Professional practice/careers in practice** – We developed a Community Practice Web page, with job listings, in the *TCP* we have columns on types of practice careers such as community psychologists

in foundations, health care, and other fields, and are now launching profiles of practitioners on the Web. Bill Neigher and Al Ratcliffe raised the idea of a Value Proposition that would inform the marketplace about what it is that CPs do. This led to Survey #3, focused on jobs, training and the Value Proposition (Winter and Spring 2011 issues of *TCP*).

Recent years have also seen an increased Web/blog presence led by our student members Sharon Hakim, Tiffeny Jimenez, Victoria Chien and others. Post Pasadena Summit, we continued our work on defining the core competencies for CP Practice with Ray Scott taking the lead (Winter 2007 issue of *TCP*).

Last year, having earned our stripes, the Practice Group became the Practice Council – an official member of the EC with great support from Mo Elias.

Just as we have co-created all our previous accomplishments, we invite you to join us in growing SCRA and community psychology. It is time for the next big jump: Now that we are moving towards agreed upon definitions of community psychology practice and the accompanying capacities, we can ask: “How well are we doing at training our students? Is it time for unified standards? How well are we doing at creating an identifiable market as community psychologists for our graduates and for ourselves? How well are we disseminating our knowledge to have impacts on the world around us?”

Let’s imagine what it would take to manifest the SCRA vision. The world desperately needs help manifesting this vision. This plenary was an invitation to take bold steps to move forward. The field of community psychology can play a real role in this process if we choose. So let’s move forward together.

Guiding Principles for Education in Community Psychology Research and Action

Written by Gregor V. Sarkisian, Antioch University Los Angeles, and Tiffeny R. Jimenez, Michigan State University

Virtue is a state of war, and to live in it we have always to combat with ourselves.

–Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Education programs in community research and action are the main contexts whereby our students are educated about critical theories relevant to studying and engaging in community-level change. Moreover, these contexts are critical for students in gaining important professional skill sets and developing competencies for participating in community change processes with communities. With education in community psychology (CP) research and action being such a platform for creating social change, a lack of attention to this practice is potentially a detriment to the field. This article explores a rationale for the development of principles of education for CP research and action as a means to come closer to our vision and improve internal accountability within the field.

In the larger context of psychology, CP education and training programs are relatively new, emerging about 40 years ago. In 1970, Iscoe and Spielberger co-edited one of the only books focused on training – *Community Psychology: Perspectives in Training and Research* – with several chapters outlining principles for CP education and training. During the 1970’s, CP was separating from clinical psychology and very few freestanding CP training programs existed. Further, the Community Mental Health (CMH) movement shaped the emerging roles in CP

training programs, which focused on a limited number of competencies in the context of mental health centers - mental health consultation, program development, systems theory, community based intervention, and evaluation.

Consistent with such competencies, more recent assessments of graduate programs conducted by the Council of Education Programs (CEP) and Community Psychology Practice Council (CPPC) suggest there is a core curriculum among graduate training programs focusing more on community-based applied research, assessment and evaluation, ecological systems theory, interventions, and program planning and development (Dziadkowiec, & Jimenez, 2009; Gaitlin, Rushenberg, & Hazel, 2005; Neigher & Ratcliffe, 2011). It is evident that some competencies are taught more regularly than others; yet, we know from our work and the work of our colleagues that some competencies, which may not be the focus of training in the majority of programs, are offered in some programs because of the careers their students seek and the competencies required of those types of positions.

The debate over standards for CP education and training began nearly 40 years ago and attendees of the 2011 SCRA Biennial expressed an understandable healthy resistance to standards or the notion of an external force driving accountability of CP training programs. Although there was resistance, there was also acknowledgement of the importance of consistency in CP education to promote transparency for our students and potential employers. This sentiment was voiced by students, faculty, and practitioners at the Plenary and the Town Hall session on *Guiding Principles for Education and Training in Community Psychology*, which concluded with a recommendation to the CEP to facilitate the development of guiding

principles for education programming in CP.

It could be argued that the development of standards across education programming could lead to stagnation and a lack of innovation within the field; nevertheless, the motivation to contribute to actualized social change creates some impetus for holding ourselves accountable to certain principles of education practice. External accountability such as developing standards and pursuing accreditation is one way to reach some consistency; however, more intentionally pursuing internal accountability could be a creative alternative for a values-driven field such as ours. Internal accountability

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refers to the extent to which we as educators of CP are accountable to our students, ourselves, and the communities with which we work. It is our opinion that one viable method of enacting our values and promoting internal accountability is to develop unified principles of CP education and training.

Guiding principles are collective norms of behavior that follow from a society's cultural beliefs and values (Crow, 2011). As it relates to CP education programming, guiding principles are a collective sense of what is true, what is right, and what is the most proper focus of education

programming within the field. The nature of such principles for graduate education in CP thereby refers to cultural norms that clarify what is and what is not CP education across graduate programs in our field, based on the existing beliefs and values within the organization's people. In a more practical sense, guiding principles can more clearly hold the field internally accountable in education practice because they are enacted through the members of a society where each person carries and conveys principles throughout day-to-day behaviors.

In conceptualizing principles to guide community psychology training within the context of the CMH movement, Golann (1970) articulated five principles to guide CP training programs to be consistent with the roles of the Federal regulations governing CMH centers. For example, principle 4 states "Training should include a basic knowledge of social systems and supervised participant-observation in more than one of the several systems" (p. 52). This is a principle that enacts the value on internal accountability to an external standard of practice. While it is clear that the culture of CP has advanced in research, theory and action, we argue that we have neglected our internal accountability to the field as it relates to consistency across CP education and training programs.

Guiding principles would allow us to appreciate the strengths across the diversity of our graduate programs while staying true to the values of our field, no matter the emphasis of the program (e.g., clinical, community-based research, evaluation, theory development, applied, etc.). If such principles were developed and adopted voluntarily by programs, potential benefits could include: promoting information and resource sharing for students and faculty across programs nationally and internationally; creating opportunities to advance

pedagogy in CP by strengthening our understanding of the full spectrum of CP education; promoting diverse educational opportunities for learning community psychology skills within and across various contexts; and clarifying for employers and students what a degree in CP can provide for them.

Moving forward, we recommend developing unified principles for CP education and training through a reflective and inclusive process whereby some type of consensus is reached. Developing unified principles of CP education and training could occur through a collaborative process involving CP education and training programs, the CEP, and the SCRA Executive Committee utilizing a strengths-based approach in appreciating the diverse specialties inherent in each program. We would recommend transparency as a starting point for the development of guiding principles, and a principle to guide transparency in CP education and training might be to have education programs explicitly describe the curricular and extracurricular opportunities for students to develop their competencies in CP. Admittedly, we are currently doing exceptional work toward our mission and goals as a society; however, reflecting on our educational practice to be more intentional in achieving social justice can only make us better.

How Many Times Have You Explained What “Community Psychology” Is?

Written by Susan Wolfe

Last year, I asked my undergraduate research methods students at the University of Texas at Dallas, “Who has heard of community psychology?” Nobody raised their hands. These students were upper level undergraduates who were majoring in psychology.

This is not the first time I have had this experience, suggesting that our profession is relatively unknown, even within psychology. Why does this matter? There are several compelling reasons to create a recognized profession of “community psychology,” create a market, and provide masters and doctoral level students with the requisite skills.

First, most community psychologists choose to pursue their graduate degrees in this field because they want to make a difference. They want the skills to do community research and advocacy, and to create social change. They are all interested in practicing community psychology. Many, particularly PhD students, are interested in practicing by conducting research in an academic setting

Many masters level programs expect their students will pursue practice careers and are training practitioners

while training the next generations of community psychologists. We are doing a great job of training and mentoring this group. However, many others are interested in practicing community psychology full-time in a community-based or other setting. Such practice often requires a wider range of skills, and different skills and competencies than those required by academia. Evidence discussed by Sarkisian and Jimenez earlier in this column suggests that many of our programs are failing this group.

Second, we can have impact through our research and activities from academic positions, but we can often have as much or greater influence in practice settings. Many community psychologists

work for the federal, state, or local governments where they regularly affect policy, funding priorities, and programs. Some find employment in research, evaluation, or policy focused organizations that produce reports and position papers that affect policy and programming. Lawmakers and program developers do not read academic journals, but they do read reports from such stakeholder groups. We have community psychology colleagues working for foundations where they are affecting funding priorities and grants. And this list could go on to include the multiple roles filled by community psychologists in research, evaluation, and other community based settings and the multiple ways that practice settings allow community psychologists opportunities to make a difference.


Third, if we are going to train students to work in such settings, they need the right skills, experiences, mentoring, and support. One research-based company recently posted openings for community psychologists, and found that many applicants were not adequately trained in community dynamics, systems change, prevention, and other skills routinely used outside of academic settings. Additionally, some PhD students have commented to some practitioners over the years that they are reluctant to inform faculty of their interest in practice careers because they are afraid they will not be taken as seriously or treated the same as their academically-oriented peers. As students, they are already noticing the lower priority their faculty place on practice compared with academic activities.

Finally, practice careers are not the avenue for students who are not suited for academia, for those whose personal circumstances do not allow the freedom to pursue an academic career, nor for those who did not get tenure. Many community psychologists

pursue practice careers because they want to apply the values and skills they gain in their graduate programs to real world settings on a full-time basis. Many masters level programs expect their students will pursue practice careers and are training practitioners. The data collected to date tells us that many PhD programs do not. We would increase our impact, and ultimately increase our visibility and demand if there were more of us out there, and more of us fully prepared with the entire range of skills available. The best avenue we have for marketing community psychology is to prepare students at the masters and PhD level to practice community psychology and demonstrate what we have to offer across a variety of settings.

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Disabilities Action

Edited by Kendra Liljenquist and Erin Stack

Positive Youth Development for all Youth

Written by Kendra Liljenquist and Jessica Kramer, Boston University

Over ten years ago, Reed Larson, in his article "Toward a Psychology of Positive Youth Development" acknowledged that while much research and programming had been dedicated to understanding and eliminating negative youth outcomes such as drug abuse and violence, little effort had been put into understanding the ways positive outcomes are fostered and generated for youth (Larson, 2001). Larson acknowledged that in order to gain a better understanding of adolescent development, approaches to encourage youth to become motivated, self-sufficient adults were needed. Since the year 2000, research has gone into exploring the necessary experiences and supports that foster positive youth development (Theokas & Lerner, 2006)

Opportunities for youth to develop initiative, nurture peer relationships, and build teamwork and social skills have been shown to generate positive outcomes (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003). Programming aimed at fostering positive youth development for youth who come from low socio-economic and/or minority backgrounds have become plentiful. However, this

is only a fraction of the youth in the U.S. Other youth who would similarly benefit greatly from positive development programs are often not targeted for inclusion in these programs.

One such population are youth with various physical, intellectual and developmental disabilities. These youth are rarely actively recruited or included in many of these programs designed to foster leadership skills, social relationships or any of the other numerous experiences needed for youth to develop positively (Carter, Swedeen, Walter, Moss, & Hsin, 2011). Instead, separate programs aimed to serve youth with disabilities are developed and implemented. It can be argued that separate programs are needed to address the specific physical, mental, and emotional needs of youth with disabilities. However, disability scholars and community leaders have recently critiqued the assumption that youth with disabilities are more vulnerable and in need of remediation because of their impairments (Priestley, 1998). They imagine an alternative approach in which youth with disabilities reach their full potential without focusing exclusively on impairment. Positive youth development appears to be a natural expansion of this call for an alternative approach. Indeed,

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we should recognize the potential positive impact that inclusive positive development programs could have for youth with disabilities.

It has been shown that youth with disabilities participate in school clubs, sports teams, and community organizations less than their peers

It's time to stop approaching the development of youth with disabilities as entirely separate from the development of other youth

(Michelson et al., 2009). When youth with disabilities are unable to participate in these activities, they miss out on opportunities to develop competence in academic, social, and vocational areas, positive self-identity, and connections with others (Lerner, Fisher & Weinberg, 2000; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Although we may assume youth with disabilities do not participate because of impairment-related restrictions, research shows that environmental barriers are much more likely to restrict participation. Barriers include knowledge about programs, attitudes and knowledge of program staff, and the actual accessibility of the programs themselves (Law, Petrenchik, King, & Hurley, 2007).

Furthermore, the target population of many current positive youth development research and programs are at increased risk for disability status (Birenbaum, 2002). Poverty and lack of resources has been shown to negatively impact development thus highlighting the importance of broadening the positive youth development movement to explore and address the benefits of positive development programs offered to those youth with disabilities as well as other risk populations. Carter and colleagues (2011) noted that when youth with physical and intellectual

disabilities were asked to describe key factors contributing to leadership development, many reported participation in extracurricular clubs and organizations, informal community activities, and disability-specific opportunities. It is important to recognize that activities specific to youth with disabilities are only one part of the equation for positive development for this population.

While some may assume youth with disabilities are a separate target population, there is great potential to draw connections between the positive youth development literature and the disability and rehabilitation literature. Research exploring outcomes associated with participation and inclusion of youth with disabilities has primarily stayed in the rehabilitation and disability literature; however, knowledge gained through research about positive outcomes through involvement in activities should be shared across fields and with the community in order to promote positive social change for youth with disabilities. Similarly, exploration of positive youth development has stayed primarily in the child and adolescent development literature. Understanding how to best foster positive youth development outcomes as learned through this literature could benefit the disability and rehabilitation literature by acknowledging best practices. As Modell and Valdez (2002) point out, youth with disabilities still need the social skills and relationships that can be afforded in youth programming to make the transition to adulthood. Thus, broadening positive youth development study and practice to include youth with disabilities could prove to be a great benefit to this population.

It's time to stop approaching the development of youth with disabilities as entirely separate from the development of other youth and instead recognize that youth

with disabilities share many of the same developmental needs as other adolescents (Priestley, 2003). Let's ensure our programs for youth are really for all youth.

Suggestions for promoting more inclusive positive youth development programs

Carter, Swedeen, Moss and Pesko (2010) offered suggestions for promoting more inclusive extracurricular activities. This process begins with addressing extracurricular opportunities and what the potential barriers may be for students who came from various backgrounds, developing new activities in collaboration with the youth to attract a broader range of students, and helping students understand there are multiple ways of participating in any activity. Further suggestions, offered by the authors, are listed below:

- **Recognize different ways of participating** – Changing the way activities are done, generating new roles based on individual assets, and providing additional staff and/or peer training are excellent ways to get more youth involved and benefiting from various programs;
- **Work with youth, not for youth, to identify ways to be included** – Creating a panel of students from all different backgrounds (not just those with an identified disability) and encouraging dialog and collaboration amongst the group fosters greater understanding of each others' strengths and difficulties as well as puts youth in an active role for determining ways to be included that best fits their needs; and
- **Talk openly and honestly about additional resources that will be needed** – Thinking creatively and looking to partner with other organizations such as centers for independent living and state rehabilitation councils

is a great way to help ensure programs are more accessible. In addition, many of these types of organization are often very eager to collaborate to help promote more inclusive environments for youth.

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Environment & Justice

Edited by Manuel Riemer

Environment and Justice: A bittersweet move toward center stage

*Written by Courte C.W. Voorhees
and Manuel Riemer,
Wilfrid Laurier University*

Introduction

Every day it becomes clearer that community psychology, sustainability, and environmental justice are intrinsically linked. Although such clarity is helpful, it is a sign that environmental debates that were once relegated to fringe groups of bickering conservationists and oil companies are entering the mainstream of social issues. This continued movement of environmental issues toward center stage reminds us of the importance of

our individual and collective actions toward sustainable practices. It is humbling and heartening to see all of the efforts within SCRA to address environmental concerns, while hard to witness how much more work is needed. In an era of growing political denial or, at the least, forgetfulness of environmental degradation and resultant social injustices, our pioneering work in SCRA is more needed than ever.

The Environment and Justice Interest Group (E&JIG) has been working to integrate environmental concerns into the work and mechanisms of SCRA as seamlessly as possible. You may have noticed some of this work at the Biennial, where new standards for sustainability in SCRA were set. Additionally, E&JIG members presented their research and action on environmental issues. And, with the gracious support of SCRA President Jim Cook and the Executive Committee, the E&JIG is starting monthly teleconference meetings to exchange ideas, opportunities, and reports of our research and action.

One of this year's main goals for the interest group was to advocate for and support a greener Biennial. As Riemer and Voorhees (2011) have argued in this column, there are many things conferences organizers can do to make their conference more environmentally sustainable, while also paying attention to other important issues such as accessibility and consciousness of labor rights. Fortunately, the organizers of this last Biennial were very supportive of this idea. Thus, it was actually very easy for our interest group to help green the conference. All we had to do was provide ideas for what could be done to make a conference more environmentally sustainable. The organizers did the leg work of actually making it happen. For that, we want to express our deep gratitude. Actions done to green up this conference included a reduction

of waste by avoiding conference bags and non-essential flyers, and using reusable water bottles. Additionally, there was a move to mostly online conference programs, environmentally friendly printed conference programs, more vegetarian meals, and a conference location that is easily accessible by public transportation as well as restaurants and stores that are in walking distance. With these changes, the ecological footprint of our Biennial has been significantly reduced – and in alignment with E&JIG values. We believe that a new standard has been set that all future conferences should live up to. We hope to work with the International Community Psychology Conference, future SCRA Biennials, regional ECO conferences, and others to ensure our reduced ecological footprint – both environmental and social – is sustainable.

At the conference, several members of our interest group presented papers, posters, and roundtable discussions that highlighted the relevance of environmental issues to our field. Whether it is how to motivate people to live a more sustainable life, engage young people in environmental activism, or think more broadly about how our communities can become more sustainable, in each case, community psychology was applied to support environmental efforts. We also had a meeting at the conference at which we decided to start a regular conference call and link up with other groups within SCRA and APA.

Momentum is growing in the E&JIG, parallel with the growing need for attention on environmental degradation and the inevitable injustices that spring from them. The teleconference calls will showcase current work and opportunities for SCRA members to get involved at multiple levels. All are welcome to join in for as long as their schedules and interest allow. We firmly believe that the foci of the E&JIG intersect

with all of the work that we do in SCRA. As advocates of prevention, it seems prudent for us to understand and act on these intersections before they expand beyond our ability to do more than ameliorate their dramatic consequences. Please join the conversation and help us to keep the grassroots green! 🌍

International

Edited by Mitsuru Ikeda

I took over the chairperson role of the International Committee in June at the Biennial from Serdar M. Değirmencioglu. In my first piece for *TCP*, I would like to start with writing about the current situation in Japan five months after the earthquake.

On March 11, 2011, a huge earthquake hit the northeast part of Japan, and its aftermath still casts a dark shadow on our daily life. What I am writing here may not seem to be related to community psychology (CP), or international issues in CP, but I believe that sharing my experiences and reflections regarding the earthquake with *TCP* readers indeed contributes to the development of CP. Also, I would like to keep the readers' focus on the process of recovery as an educational tool. Specifically, I would like the readers to listen to, and remember the voice of the victims of past natural disasters, such as the earthquake in the Indian Ocean off Sumatra in 2004, in New Zealand in 2011, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

The Great East Japan Earthquake

The March 11th Great East Japan Earthquake and its related loss and damage will surely be viewed as an international event with serious impact. Over 15,000 human lives were lost, and approximately 5,000 people are still missing as of August 2011. Far more than 240,000 buildings and houses were fully

or partially destroyed due to the earthquake and the tsunami waves, and more than 100,000 people are still staying in the evacuation shelters.

Psychologists in Japan started professional support immediately after the earthquake. Many associations of professional psychologists (e.g., Association of Japanese Clinical Psychology, Japanese Society of Certified Clinical Psychologists, etc.) started clinical services in response to the needs from the earthquake and tsunami survivors. Besides such direct clinical services, the *Japanese Psychological Association* built a special website to gather and exchange information and resources about the earthquake from a psychological perspective. The topics included practical strategies to provide effective psychological intervention for disaster relief and PTSD prevention, ethical considerations to conduct research in the disaster-affected areas, and financial support to resume psychological research. Similar Web sites were also built by other psychological associations, such as the *Japanese Society of Social Psychology* (JSSP) and the *Japanese Association of Student Counseling*, and each academic association provided information and support related to their areas of specialty.

For instance, JSSP provided an exposition of the research findings related to the positive and negative effects and roles of mass media. In fact, it was found that the TV news had a strong negative effect on those who were watching. Shortly after the earthquake, all the TVs broadcasted live scenes of the tsunami waves attacking the towns and drowning out the cars, boats, houses, and even human victims. Such scenes were so shocking and tragic, and were broadcasted so repeatedly, that some people who had not been directly affected by the earthquake even suffered from acute stress disorder. Looking at this case, there seemed

to be a dilemma in mass media; should they be responsible to report the truth objectively, though the truth might sometimes be harmful? This case demonstrated to us that further psychological research on the effect of the mass communication in the disaster was required, and the practical strategies to make the best use of mass media should be included in the disaster preparedness.

Another noteworthy phenomenon involved the activities of volunteers. In the process of disaster relief, a considerable number of volunteers are required to support the disaster victims and communities in various ways - clearing mud and rubble from the affected areas, distributing food and living necessities, logistics and transportation, etc. Japan has experienced many earthquakes, such as the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995 and the Mid-Niigata Prefecture Earthquake in 2004, and through these experiences we have learned how to manage volunteers. In the 1995 Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, volunteers could not function very well at the initial stage because an unmanageable number of volunteers immediately rushed into the affected area. Based on the lessons learned from these experiences, many people who wished to help the disaster victims in the earthquake this time stayed back and waited until the volunteer management systems became ready. The earthquake this time, however, caused unanticipated damage; thus, it took a few weeks to see the full picture of the damage. As a consequence, the potential volunteers had qualms about entering the affected area, and the shortage of volunteers was a serious problem for the first month.

What can we learn from this episode? There are many types of manuals for disaster preparedness, and SCRA, as well, developed a manual for disaster recovery in 2010 which

can be found at the SRCA website (http://www.scr27.org/resources/disasterresources/scra_manual_final5810pdf). Most of those manuals are evidence-based and practice-oriented. However, unlike other social and psychological problems, the contexts of disaster situations are very much different each other. Furthermore, since natural disasters such as enormous earthquakes do not happen very frequently, it is difficult for the researchers to conduct a field test (or an evaluation) of their theoretically-sound strategic plans. As a result, it may happen that a manual or a strategy based on past experience is not applicable to the next disaster; in other words, too much precision in manuals many limit the possible local responsive actions. This might be another dilemma that lies between practically applicable strategies and widely applicable strategies, which should be tackled by community researchers.

Academicians, too, suffered some damage. The earthquake and the tsunami destroyed the buildings in colleges and universities and other facilities for research, and it took a few weeks or months to repair those buildings and facilities. Some researchers had their data damaged, burned or flooded. Many college faculty had to spend much of their time and effort to ensure the safety of the students and college staff, to support students in many ways, and to help local recovery actions. A shortage of electricity due to the nuclear accidents is now a serious problem in daily life, not only in the disaster-affected area, but also in many places in Japan, including Tokyo. Who could have imagined that we would have to do a lecture in front of 100 students with no PowerPoint, transparencies, or other visual aids and without AC when the outside temperature is 95 degrees Fahrenheit? All these things, along with many other problems, are still

continuing today in large areas, and it is sometimes difficult for researchers to continue their research and other academic work. In the field of business administration, *business continuity planning*, or BCP, is recently gaining attention - it focuses on the preparedness to recover and continue the business rapidly with prioritizing recovery steps. Community psychologists have been interested in developing "community continuity planning" as our profession, but I personally think that we also need to consider how to avoid discontinuity of our professional and academic work, not only for ourselves but also for those who we can support.

Finally, representing the Japanese people, I would like to express our deepest and sincere appreciation for the many sources of support from all over the world.

The 14th Annual Conference of the Japanese Society of Community Psychology

Under such circumstances, the *14th Annual Conference of the Japanese Society of Community Psychology* (JSCP) was held in Tokyo on July 16 and 17, 2011, and over 300 community researchers and activists met to develop and enhance their network and communication. Here, I would like to share my experiences and impressions of this conference, as they relate to three areas.

Diversity: No one would disagree that appreciating human diversity is one of the most important guiding concepts in CP, but what "diversity" really means may differ from person to person depending on one's experience or social context. Unlike in the U.S., ethnic/racial diversity is not a very ostensible issue in Japan because of historical, geographical and political reasons (however, I would not say there are no racial/ethnic issues in Japan). Regardless,

the community psychologists in Japan also have been, and are, actively tackling this issue in many different ways, though many of them have not been aware of it. The theme of the conference this year "Enjoy Diversity!" presented a big challenge. Since its start, CPs have been seeking the way to *understand, integrate, and appreciate* human diversity and the community psychologists' effort was, as many people may agree, somehow successful, but not perfect. Nevertheless, the JSCP envisioned one step further and a more proactive approach.

The opening plenary, followed by a panel discussion, began with music. The readers of this article may not know very much about Lady Gaga, much less the lyrics of her song "*Born This Way*." In this song, Lady Gaga addresses all sorts of human diversity including ethnic/racial, sexual orientation, and persons with disabilities, and concludes that we should embrace who we are as individuals.

As symbolized in this song, the presenters of the opening plenary and the following session addressed how delightful it was living with diverse people. The panel consisted of three presenters: Dr. Osamu Nagase, an associate professor of disability studies at the University of Tokyo, who addressed the issues related to the process of translating the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, in which he has been involved for a long time; the second presenter was a psychiatrist, Dr. Toshiaki Hirata, who has been providing special support for LGBT people; and the third presenter, Mr. Masakazu Soejima, was a school teacher of special needs education, who spoke about his experience teaching in a classroom in the pediatric unit of a university hospital. Each of their talks focused on the fact that, for them, it was neither special nor difficult to live with diverse groups of people. On the other hand, all three presenters emphasized that

such acceptance of diversity may not come easy for everyone.

Disaster: Because I have written about the current situation in Japan above, I will not expand on the details here. I would just like to write that among various post-disaster practices, some were more individual-based clinical interventions and others were focused more on community-based preventive approaches, and most of their practices are ongoing. Their continuous involvement is still required in the disaster-affected areas, and the practitioners also were to be supported, especially financially, to continue their interventions.

Globalization: The conference this year was the most international conference that I have ever seen, though JSCP was a Japanese local organization. The Committee for International Relations of the JSCP planned a session titled "*Toward a global community psychology: The role of the JSCP and Japanese community psychologists*." In this session, the interview videos of four community psychologists from Poland, Turkey, Korea and Taiwan were shown, followed by comments from the President of the JSCP. Looking at the SCRA biennials, past three ICCPs, and other relatively international conferences of CP, the majority of the participants were usually from the U.S. and European nations, and a few people from the Asia and Africa regions have been participating in those conferences. However, it does not necessarily mean that there is a small number of community psychologists in Asia and Africa; rather, CP research and practice are actively implemented in any area of the world. For instance, there were the academic associations in India and Japan, and quite recently in Korea was launched a division of Korean Psychological Association. The history of CP in Japan dates back to 1969, and the JSCP has over 350 registered members. How to enhance the global communication and collaboration among the world CP colleagues is now an urgent issue not only in JSCP but also SCRA. As symbolized in this

international session, CP is now an emerging discipline in Asia, and Japan is expected to play a responsible role in networking Asian CPs. Though no clear solutions came up at the session, we have to continue the debate, and hopefully JSCP and SCRA will join hands in the near future.

The next annual conference will be sometime in June or July of 2012 in Hokkaido, and those who are interested in the JSCP and its activities should visit http://www.soc.nii.ac.jp/jscp2/english/e_main.html

Upcoming Events

Here is information on the upcoming events related to CP:

The Asia-Pacific Region of SCRA is now planning a meeting entitled "*Innovative Social Change Efforts and Well-Being in East Asia: Promises and Opportunities in Community Psychology*." Aiming to promote networking opportunities among the community researchers and activists in East Asia, the meeting will be relatively small and informal, but is expected to be the very first opportunity to envision the future of CP in Asia. The meeting is scheduled on October 15, 2011, in Tokyo. For more information, you may contact Dr. Toshi Sasao, SCRA Asia-Pacific Regional Coordinator, at sasao@icu.ac.jp.

Another important international event is the **IV International Conference of Community Psychology** in Barcelona, June 21-23, 2012, hosted by the University of Barcelona in collaboration with the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Under the theme of "Community and Politics in a World in Crisis: Rethinking Community Action in the New Century," extensive and energetic discussion is expected. The first call for proposals deadline is September 30, 2011, and early-bird registration will be closed on January 31, 2012. Further information is available at the official website at <http://www.4cipc2012.org/>

These are some of the international events related to CP. If you know any

other events, conferences, seminars, workshops, and/or any professional gatherings, wherever it will be, please contact Mitsuru Ikeda, Chair, SCRA International Committee at dct63978@gmail.com. In addition, if you know any community psychologists or anyone who is interested in international issues, please let them know my contact address or just send their names and addresses to Mitsuru Ikeda. 🌐

Public Policy

Edited by Judah Viola

Community Psychology and Policy Work: RAISE THE AGE



Written by

Melissa Strompolis,
University of North Carolina at Charlotte,



Rett Liles,
The Council for Children's Rights,



and Laura Y. Clark,
The Council for Children's Rights

At the 2011 Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) Biennial in Chicago, there were several preconference workshops including one entitled, *Doing Policy Work as a Community Psychologist*. The workshop was designed to provide an opportunity for graduate students, early career community psychologists, and experienced researchers and practitioners to discuss integrating policy work into their current practice. The workshop offered examples, experiences, and perspectives of doing policy work within community psychology.

As a current student in community psychology (Strompolis), the experience was informative, exciting, and also intimidating. For students, pursuing projects and activities in the community can be challenging and often difficult to navigate. Additionally, finding the desired project or activity, in this case policy work, can add another level of complexity. Although it can be challenging to engage in policy work as a community psychology student, many students have found ways to gain experience in the policy field, and this brief write-up offers part of my experience as one example.

As part of the degree requirements at UNC-Charlotte, doctoral students are required to complete two practica. Given my interests in nonprofit organizations and children's health, I was placed for my practicum at the Council for Children's Rights (CFCR), a nonprofit organization that serves children and families in Charlotte, North Carolina. CFCR provides pro-bono legal services to youth and families primarily in the areas of special education, abuse and neglect, mental health, domestic violence, and juvenile justice. Additionally, CFCR will accept any case in which a youth is in jeopardy of losing government or community services mandated by law. Within the CFCR, the Larry King Center for Building Children's

Futures (LKC) works to help youth and families through macro-level changes, including a legislative agenda to advocate for policy change, research and evaluation efforts, and strategic and community planning.

The CFCR placement was advantageous for me because of the team that I worked with and the topic matched my interests. The team included Laura Y. Clark who holds a master's degree in clinical/community psychology and Rett Liles who holds a professional doctorate in law. We each contributed different components to a project, with an overall goal of bettering the lives of children in North Carolina.

The Larry King Center (LKC) and the Council for Children's Rights

The bill would stop the automatic prosecution of 16 and 17 year olds as adults and allow the juvenile court to decide the most appropriate course of action

(CFCR) worked with child advocates across the state to encourage the state legislature to raise the age at which youth are charged as adults in the justice system in North Carolina. North Carolina is one of only two states in the country to automatically try, charge, probate, sentence, and incarcerate youth in the adult criminal justice system. The project was called *Raise the Age* and LKC/CFCR engaged in actions to help change the age of juvenile jurisdiction in North Carolina. If passed into law, the Youth Accountability Act (HB 1414), would raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction in North Carolina from 16 to 18. The bill would stop the automatic

prosecution of 16 and 17 year olds as adults and allow the juvenile court to decide the most appropriate course of action.

The Youth Accountability Act is important for several reasons. First, research has shown that the decision-making ability of 16 and 17 year olds is significantly lower than that of adults (Gardner & Steinberg, 2005; Geidd, Weinberger, & Elvevag, 2005). Second, youth in the juvenile justice system have access to more court-ordered services than those in the criminal justice system (e.g., court counselor, personal treatment or rehabilitation plan, required parental involvement, required educational classes; North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency

We aimed to show stakeholders ... the impact of the criminal justice system on youth and the impact of the criminal justice system on our society

Prevention [NCDJJDP], 2009a,b,c). Third, studies have shown that the rehabilitative services offered through the juvenile court system tend to result in reduced rearrest rates and longer time periods until rearrest (Miller-Johnson & Rosch, 2007). Finally, raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction will reduce long-term societal costs (NCDJJDP, 2009c). For example, the financial investment for evidence-based early intervention and prevention programs for juvenile offenders reduce later costs of potential recidivism.

The first steps of our project began in Fall 2008 by gathering research, reports, and data on youth and adults

in the justice system. This information came from national and local data bases (e.g., NCDJJDP, United States Census Bureau) as well as nonprofit organizations (e.g., Annie E. Casey Foundation) and scholarly journals (American Journal of Community Psychology, see Seave, 2011). We aimed to show stakeholders (e.g., clients, parents, legislators, voters) the impact of the criminal justice system on youth and the impact of the criminal justice system on our society. The information we gathered was used to develop flyers, reports, and Web site content and distributed to the local community, media outlets, and North Carolina legislators (see <http://www.cfcrights.org>). During the 2009 legislative session, LKC/CFRCR and partners across the state (e.g., Action for Children North Carolina, The Covenant with North Carolina's Children) continued to work on the issue and were successful in lobbying the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate for a legislative task force portion of the Youth Accountability bill to be included in the state budget. The state task force studied the impact of transitioning 16 and 17 year olds to juvenile court and created an implementation plan for expanding the jurisdiction of juvenile court. During the 2011 legislative session, the task force presented recommendations to the legislature that 16 and 17 year olds accused of minor crimes should be managed in juvenile court. Following the presentation by the task force, Governor Beverly Perdue issued an executive order that the task force be extended an additional year to continue examining the issue. As a result of these efforts, partners across the state will continue to hold regional awareness and advocacy forums to mobilize the community around the importance of this issue and the need to pass the Youth Accountability Act into law.

The experience of this practicum provided an opportunity for me as a student to participate and witness policy work in action. Research and information was gathered and then presented by our team of advocates at community and legislative meetings. The research and information was also used to inform suggested legislative changes to better the lives of children and youth. While gathering research and information may seem insignificant, seeing our team's work on flyers, in legislative agendas, and hearing our work in advocacy efforts has been one of my most rewarding experiences.

Although there are other ways for students to gain policy experience as community psychologists, connecting with an organization that does advocacy and policy work in your



**Council for
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Rights**

**The Larry King Center
for Building Children's Futures**

local community may be beneficial. In order for future community psychologists to have a meaningful impact on our nation's policy (i.e., advise about and revise policies that are inconsistent with current research and knowledge; Smedley, 2000), the development of policy and advocacy related skills within academic training are imperative. Both advocacy and policy have been identified as core competencies for community psychologists (Dziadkowiec & Jimenez, 2009; Scott, 2007), with an emphasis on possessing political skills (e.g., advocacy, lobbying for change, communicating with legislators). The combination of academic education and policy and advocacy experience can better prepare students for doing policy work on real-world issues.

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Regional Update

Edited by
Susan Dvorak
McMahon

It was so great to see so many friends and colleagues at the Biennial in

Chicago! The conference succeeded in bringing together people with similar values, facilitating the development of personal and professional relationships, and sharing our important and meaningful work. In addition to the conference, I hope people had a chance to visit some sites in Chicago and have fun! Thanks to all who came and to the many who contributed to a successful conference. Our conference planners from Roosevelt, National Louis, and Adler put in a tremendous amount of work, and it paid off in many ways, including financial success. The Art Institute event hosted by DePaul was also a special treat. I hope that many of you will be able to continue connecting through regional conferences, as well as our next major international event in Barcelona, Spain scheduled for June 21 to 23, 2012.

In the summer issue of the *TCP*, I welcomed 6 new Coordinators (3 International Regional Liaisons and 3 U.S. Regional Coordinators). We continue with positive regional energy, and I am pleased to have 4 more new people join us. From Instituto Universitário in Lisbon, Portugal, we welcome José Ornelas ([\[ispa.pt\]\(mailto:ispa.pt\)\). Amy Carrillo joins us from the American University of Cairo \(\[acarrillo@aucegypt.edu\]\(mailto:acarrillo@aucegypt.edu\)\), and Kotoe Ikeda \(\[kotoe.harp@gmail.com\]\(mailto:kotoe.harp@gmail.com\)\) joins SCRA as a Student International Regional Coordinator from Ochamomizu Women's University in Tokyo, Japan. And we have a new Student Regional Coordinator for the Southeast region of the U.S., Virginia Johnson \(\[vjohns27@uncc.edu\]\(mailto:vjohns27@uncc.edu\)\), from UNC Charlotte. Welcome- we are so glad that you are getting involved with SCRA in a leadership role! We also want to thank Anne Brodsky, Maria Chun, and Amaris Watson for their leadership and work as they step down from Regional Coordinator and Student Regional Coordinator roles.](mailto:jornelas@</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Feel free to contact your Regional Coordinator or Liaison to learn more about the regional SCRA-related events, share your ideas, and become more involved in SCRA. If you are interested in serving as a Regional Coordinator, Student Regional Coordinator, or International Regional Liaison, please contact me or a coordinator from your region. We are particularly in need of people from Latin American and the Southeast and Southwest regions of the U.S.

Midwest Region, U.S.

Regional Coordinators

Ray Legler:
rlegler@depaul.edu
Andrea Flynn:
AFlynn1@depaul.edu
Nathan Todd:
NTodd@depaul.edu

Student Regional Coordinators

Abigail Brown:
abrown57@depaul.edu

News from the Midwest

Written by Nathan Todd

The Biennial was held in Chicago this past June. Thank you to everyone who attended and presented. Thank you also to the Biennial co-chairs

(Josefina Alvarez, Bradley Olson, Susan Torres-Harding, and Judah Viola) and hosting institutions (Adler School of Professional Psychology, National-Louis University, and Roosevelt University) for organizing such an excellent Biennial. More information on the conference (including pictures) is available on the conference website (www.scra27.org/biennial/2011_chicago).

The Midwest Ecological-Community Psychology Conference will be sponsored by DePaul University in October. More information will be forthcoming on the SCRA listserve.

In additional updates, Nathan Todd and Annie Flynn begin as new Midwest Coordinators for the 2011-2012 year. Annie Flynn is an Instructor within the Department of Psychology at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois. Her research interests involve understanding how to promote students' achievement and mental and physical health within academic environments to promote well-being and in fostering success among underrepresented students. She is particularly excited to coordinate the SCRA meeting at MPA this year. Nathan is an assistant professor at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois. His research examines how religious settings and Whiteness influence engagement with social justice.

Abigail Brown continues as a Student Coordinator. Abigail is a graduate student in the Clinical-Community Psychology program at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois. Her research examines stigmatizing societal responses to chronic fatigue syndrome, and issues surrounding the illness' case definition. The Midwest Region is currently seeking an additional student coordinator. If you would like to become involved or have an outstanding student you would like to nominate, please contact Annie Flynn (aflynn1@depaul.edu).

Announcements or information

for inclusion in future Midwest updates should be sent to Nathan Todd (ntodd@depaul.edu). Additional information and a call for proposals for the SCRA meeting at the Midwestern Psychological Association Annual Meeting will be distributed soon. We look forward to receiving your proposals for the conference!

Southeast Region, U.S.

Regional Coordinators

Sarah Suiter:

Sarah.Suiter@centerstone.org

Student Regional Coordinator

Virginia Johnson:

vjohns27@uncc.edu

News from the Southeast

Written by Sarah Suiter

Summer is in full swing in the southeast, but the dog days have been anything but. From attending the Biennial in Chicago to planning the fall ECO Conference in Atlanta, SCRA members have been busy finding ways to share the knowledge and tools required to bring about meaningful community-based change. A great example of this work is the Miami SPEC Project. For the past three years, Scot Evans, Isaac & Ora Prilleltensky and their team at the University of Miami School of Education have been testing out the principles of SPEC – strengths-based, prevention, empowerment and community change – through action research in partnership with five South Florida community-based human service organizations.

The Miami SPEC project is an organizational change effort designed to promote social justice and well-being in the community through developing the transformative potential of human service organizations. The SPEC framework is based on the premise that community based human service practice can have greater social impact

when focused on *strengths* more than deficits, *prevention* rather than treatment, *empowerment* over treating people only as clients, and *community change* instead of only seeking change in individuals and families. The research team partnered with these five organizations in a multi-pronged intervention consisting of a three-year training of a leadership team in each organization through a unique graduate course offered at UM; the creation and sustained engagement of a transformation team within each organization; and ongoing consultation, action research, and creation of a SPEC network.

The research team acted as “critical friends” to the organizations by offering frameworks and creating structures and processes that helped encourage them to think more deeply about their values, beliefs, and assumptions related to their practices and shared understanding of social problems and solutions. Through critically reflecting on their thinking and practices through the SPEC lens, organizations illuminate the value choices and tradeoffs they make when deciding how to focus their time, energy, and resources. Ideally, this illumination will lead to decisions to better align organizational culture and practices to promote strengths, prevention, empowerment and community change.

“We discovered that our core SPEC group, with members from each organization, became a true learning community,” said Evans. “They learned from each other, sharing ideas, identifying areas to work on, and bringing those ideas and energy information to their workplace through their respective transformation teams (t-teams). For example, the t-team at the one organization had success improving internal organizational climate issues, and is now moving on to tackle developing an organizational theory of change that includes more

attention to broader systemic change.” Although the three-year research project has now ended, the change effort continues in each organization.

Announcements:

Welcome Virginia Johnson from The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, who will be serving as our Student Regional Coordinator!

2011 Southeastern Ecological and Community Psychology Conference

The community psychology graduate students at Georgia State University, in Atlanta, GA are hosting this year's **Southeastern Ecological and Community Psychology Conference (ECO) on *October 14 to 15, 2011***. This entirely student-run conference will provide a venue to share research and discuss mutual interests among individuals from both applied and academic settings who are interested in community and social ecological issues. This year's conference theme is "Community Research and Action: Rising to meet the Challenges of the 21st Century." We are excited to announce our keynote, Dr. Isaac Prilleltensky. Our call for proposals is online now at <http://www.gsu.edu/2011eco>. We are also hoping to hold a "networking" event to facilitate connections among students and community psychology practitioners. If you are interested in participating as a community psychology practitioner, please contact rrodriguez12@student.gsu.edu for further information.



Northeast Region, U.S.

Regional Coordinators

Lauren Bennett Cattaneo:

lcattane@gmu.edu

Michele Schlehofer:

mmschlehofer@salisbury.edu

Michelle Ronayne:

mronayne@ccsnnh.edu

Student Regional Coordinator

Samantha Hardesty:

hardest1@umbc.edu

News from the Northeast Region

Written by Lauren Bennett Cattaneo

Greetings from the sweltering northeast, where we have the fervent hope that temperatures will be cooler by publication time! We begin our year with a welcome and two farewells. This year we say goodbye to Anne Brodsky, Associate Professor and Associate Chair of Psychology at University of Maryland Baltimore County, who has served as a regional coordinator for the past two years. Thank you Anne for all of your work! We welcome Michelle Ronayne, who will take over Anne's spot as a first-year coordinator. Michelle is an Associate Professor of Psychology and Program Coordinator of Behavioral Sciences at Nashua Community College, and we are lucky to have her. We also say goodbye to Amaris Watson, last year's undergraduate Student Coordinator. Amaris has graduated from Salisbury University and has been offered an internship at Johns Hopkins. We wish her the very best in her endeavors!

Continuing on as third-year coordinators are Lauren Cattaneo, Associate Professor of Psychology at George Mason University, and Michele Schlehofer, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Salisbury University. Also continuing in her role as a Student Regional Coordinator is Samantha Hardesty, a doctoral

student in Community/Clinical Psychology at University of Maryland Baltimore County. We are recruiting an undergraduate student to fill our second Student Coordinator slot, and would welcome inquiries (by e-mail: LCattane@gmu.edu).

We are looking forward to the next SCRA Northeast Regional conference, which will be held as part of the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association (EPA) **March 1-4, 2012** at the **Westin Convention Center in Pittsburgh, PA**. The chief task of the Northeast Region Coordinators will be developing the NE SCRA program, which will provide an opportunity for community psychologists, practitioners, researchers, and students in the Northeast Region to connect and discuss their current and future work in research, prevention/intervention, and community advocacy.

Now is the time to start planning your proposal submission, as we'd love to continue to increase the turnout for community psychologists at EPA. To be part of the NE SCRA Program at EPA, please be on the lookout for a call for proposals on the SCRA website www.scra27.org and SCRA listservs. More to come!



West Region, U.S.

Regional Coordinators

Regina Langhout:

langhout@ucsc.edu

Joan Twohey-Jacobs:

jtwohey-jacobs@laverne.edu

Dyana Valentine:

info@dyanavalentine.com

Student Regional Coordinator

Danielle Kohfeldt:

mkcal1@yahoo.com

News from the Bay Area

Written by Danielle Kohfeldt & Regina Langhout

The network of Bay Area community psychologists and colleagues from other fields with interests in community-based research and intervention continue to meet once a semester for an informal colloquium. If you are interested in attending and/or presenting, please contact Danielle Kohfeldt or Gina Langhout (see emails below). The goal of our network is to provide a forum to informally discuss work in progress, network with other community practitioners, and provide an exchange of ideas related to community intervention work. The larger group meets twice a year, alternating between University of California Berkeley and University of California Santa Cruz, while encouraging smaller groups to form around particular interests. If you would like to be on our mailing list, please email Danielle Kohfeldt (dkohfeldt@ucsc.edu) or Gina Langhout (langhout@ucsc.edu).



Australia/New Zealand/ South Pacific

International Regional Liaison

Katie Thomas:

katiet@ichr.uwa.edu.au

International Regional Student Liaison

Kendra Swaine:

Kendra.Swaine@dsc.wa.gov.au

Australian Community Psychology Faces Future: Call for Papers and Regional Events

Written By Katie Thomas

There will be a special issue of the ACP entitled "Ignored no longer: Emerging indigenous researchers on indigenous psychologies." Mohi Rua, Bridgette Masters-Awatere and Dr Shiloh Groot of the Maori & Psychology Research Unit at the University of Waikato have called for new and emerging indigenous researchers to make a submission. The special issue will explore the breadth of indigenous psychologies through the current work of emerging indigenous researchers. The primary aims of the issue are to:

- Showcase the breadth of research being conducted by emerging indigenous researchers on issues of relevance to indigenous people;
- Profile the diversity of indigenous research; and
- Consider the position of emerging indigenous psychologies within the broader discipline of Aotearoa, Australia and the wider South Pacific.

Preference of submissions:

Preference will be given to submissions from emerging indigenous researchers engaged in work that is fundamentally action orientated and focused on real world problems faced by Indigenous communities. The issue will be

published in early 2012. Authors should read the Instruction to Authors document attached to the call for submission process and formatting. The deadline for submissions was Friday August 19, 2011. Further information can be obtained from Mohi Rua on mruea@waikato.ac.nz.

Mr. Ken Robinson, the West Australian Chair of the College of Community Psychologists recently hosted Dr. Larry K. Brendtro, the Dean of the *Starr Commonwealth Institute for Training*. In one of the many hats that Ken wears he organized an APS Professional Development Seminar entitled, *"Applying native American Indian community values to working with children and youth."* Hosted as part of Ken's involvement with the APS Child, Adolescent and Family Psychology Interest Group, the event was nonetheless of great relevance to community psychology. In order to maintain registration with the Psychology Board of Australia, all psychologists must meet three components each annual cycle: An individual learning plan, 30 hours of professional development activity, and a journal entry for each hour of professional development. Those with a specialist area of "practice endorsement," such as community psychologists must devote 16 hours to there are of specialty. Professional development activities of this caliber, delivered by an international expert in the field, are critical to the ongoing certification of Australian community psychologists and must therefore become a core of our future development planning.

Dr Brendtro's framework, known as the Circle of Courage, focuses on the rebuilding power of relationships with children and young people through strengthening their inter-generational relations. **Participants in the meeting appreciated the social justice basis of the model** and discussed their concerns and experiences of working with marginalized youth. Regional

members who would like to propose or organize a community psychology professional development activity are encouraged to contact their state representative. 🌐

Rural Issues

*Edited by Susana Helm
and Cecile Lardon*

Rural Research, Teaching, Service, & Practice: What's Happening in Community Psychology?

The RURAL interest group is devoted to highlighting issues of the rural environment that are important in psychological research, service, and teaching. As such we are interested in hearing from you, the members and friends of community psychology research and practice. What are your interests and activities in teaching, research, service, and practice? We are currently accepting brief (400 to 500 words) descriptions of your work, which we will feature in this column through out the upcoming 2011 to 2012 TCP issues. Briefs that highlight university-community collaborations, as well as faculty-mentor & student-mentee relationships would be great! By way of example, RURAL interest group co-chair Susana Helm shares her interests below.

Aloha! My name is Susana Helm, and I recently joined Cecile Lardon as co-chair of the RURAL interest group. My introduction to rural community psychology occurred in 2000 to 2001 through an interdisciplinary practicum in rural health. I participated in the federally funded Quentin N. Burdick Programs for Rural Interdisciplinary Training while a doctoral candidate in Community & Cultural Psychology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa [1,2]. Currently, I have many opportunities to engage in rural health as a faculty

in the Department of Psychiatry, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Research. We are developing evidence-based drug prevention targeting rural Native Hawaiian middle schoolers, funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse to Principal Investigator Dr. Scott Okamoto. From 2007-2011 we conducted a series of pre-prevention studies [3-6], and now are embarking on feasibility studies. Our community-engaged research addresses the paucity of evidence-based substance use prevention programs designed with, for, and by indigenous youth; most of whom are rural residents.

Teaching. Through the drug prevention project, students may apply to the "Summer Research with NIDA for Underrepresented Students" [7], the goal of which is to increase the number and capacity of high school and undergraduate students to pursue research careers. In addition, my department has established the University of Hawai'i Rural Health Collaboration (UH-RHC) housed in our National Center on Indigenous Hawaiian Behavioral Health for the purpose of improving rural mental health. My role in UH-RHC teaching has focused on data-driven curriculum and organizational development so that training and workforce development opportunities are identified and sustained [8-11].

Service & Practice. As a member of a community-based team of substance use prevention and treatment practitioners devoted to eliminating drug-related problems among Native Hawaiian communities. We recently were awarded a youth alcohol prevention grant, which I co-authored with the program director Mr. Wayne Lee (via SAMHSA). I assist with qualitative, quantitative, and multi-media evaluation, research, and related technical assistance. In addition, he and I are co-PIs on grant proposals for CBPR to develop a

Native Hawaiian Model for Youth Alcohol Prevention. By working with rural cultural practitioners in ho'oponopono, la'au lapa'au, and 'olelo Hawai'i (make right, restore balance, mental health; physical health, medicinal; Hawaiian language & related knowledge base), we are elucidating Hawaiian epistemology in youth prevention [12-14]. My role is to translate our collective insights into culturally relevant research, which ultimately informs national and state policy & practice in drug use interventions.

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School Intervention Interest Group

Edited by Paul Flaspohler & Melissa Maras

Greetings from the School Intervention Interest Group. In this issue, we are pleased to share with you a brief article describing the Mental Health-Education Integration Consortium (MHEDIC). MHEDIC is an interdisciplinary community of practice working to improve workforce preparation across the many disciplines engaged in the provision of Expanded School Mental Health. Over the past two years, we have presented several articles describing work from members of the MHEDIC Community of Practice (CoP). This article provides a more detailed description of MHEDIC including goals, activities, and outcomes associated with engagement in the CoP. As members of MHEDIC, we experience both professional and personal benefit from involvement in this group. We hope you find the description compelling.



The Mental Health Education Integration Consortium (MHEDIC): A Community of Practice Working to Advance School Mental Health

Written by
Dawn Anderson-Butcher,
Ohio State University,
and Mark D. Weist,
University of South Carolina

Preparing today's young people for tomorrow's workforce is an increasing challenge. Every day nearly 7,000 students dropout of school (Amos, 2007). Multiple barriers to learning and healthy development exist, such as mental health challenges, learning disabilities, racial/ethnic discrimination, poverty, family stressors, and other systems related issues (Adelman & Taylor, 2011; Anderson Moore, Redd, Burkhauser, Mbwana, & Collins, 2009).

To address these and other growing concerns, partnerships among schools, families, and communities have evolved that aim to enhance healthy development, academic learning, and ultimately school success through the maximization of community and school resources (Anderson-Butcher, 2004; Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004; Weist & Murray, 2007). Collaboration among school leaders, educators, school supportive services staff (e.g., school social workers, school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists), school-based mental health professionals, parents, youth development and child care workers, and others is central to these new partnership-centered designs (Berzin et al., 2011; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2010).

These new partnership-centered designs require the preparation of new types of professionals to work in and with schools, with a common set of knowledge and skills

in the areas of key policies and laws; interdisciplinary collaboration; cross-systems collaboration; the provision of academic, social-emotional, and behavioral learning supports; data-driven decision making; personal and professional growth and well-being; and cultural competence (Ball, Anderson-Butcher, Mellin, & Green, 2010; Weston, Anderson-Butcher, & Burke, 2008). Specific interdisciplinary collaboration skills such as working in teams, building relationships, engaging in family-centered practice, establishing trust, coordinating services and supports, and creating a common language, are of growing importance (Ball et al., 2010; Mellin, 2009; Weston et al., 2008).

Expanded School Mental Health and the Mental Health-Education Integration Consortium

Given these workforce preparation needs, an Expanded School Mental Health (ESMH) Approach involving a genuine shared agenda has emerged. Schools, families, and collaborating community and university partners are working together to develop and continuously improve a full continuum of effective learning supports focused on climate enhancement and mental health promotion, prevention, early intervention, and treatment for youth in general and special education in schools (Weist, 1997; Weist, Evans, & Lever, 2003; see Andis et al., 2002). When done well, ESMH leads to a range of positive student-, school-, and systems-level outcomes such as improved student behavior, enhanced school climate, and family satisfaction with services (see Armbruster & Lichtman, 1999; Jennings, Pearson, & Harris, 2000; Nabors & Reynolds, 2000; Walrath, Bruns, Anderson, Glass-Siegal, & Weist, 2004).

Because of ESMH's growing value, national leaders are trailblazing efforts to promote interdisciplinary collaboration and professional

workforce preparation in this area. This work is being done through the Mental Health-Education Integration Consortium (MHEDIC). Essentially, MHEDIC is a Community of Practice (CoP; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002), or a group of people with common interests who meet on a regular basis and work towards solving problems or improving practice through collaboration and mutual support.

MHEDIC is comprised of interdisciplinary leaders in ESMH from various disciplines (e.g., social work; education and education leadership; clinical, counseling, school and educational psychology; psychiatry; nursing; public health) and institutions (e.g., university, state and local governments, school systems, mental health systems). Members join together two times annually to focus on workforce preparation issues related to ESMH. The ultimate priority is to support mental health and academic learning among youth.

MHEDIC is connected to the IDEA Partnership, a large national coalition housed at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education and supported by the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education (see www.ideapartnership.org, and www.sharedwork.org for the National Community of Practice on Collaborative School Behavioral Health). MHEDIC uses an informed approach to developing the consortium through conscious efforts to encourage interdisciplinary membership, involve students to inform innovations in pre- and in-service training, and support local and national initiatives focused on ESMH. MHEDIC has three specific goals:

- through pre-service, graduate, and in-service training and ongoing support, equip and empower educators in their roles as promoters of student mental

health and mental health staff to work effectively in schools;

- promote interdisciplinary collaboration and mutual support among families and youth, and education and mental health/health professionals who work in schools; and
- build research and advance policy related to mental health and education systems working closely together to improve programs and services and achieve valued outcomes for students and schools.

MHEDIC Priorities

At this time, MHEDIC is organized around four central priority areas, including training and professional development, practice, research, and policy. Subgroups within MHEDIC strategically focus on these areas, honing in on critical issues related to interdisciplinary collaboration and workforce preparation within each domain area. Several key activities are of particular interest.

First, MHEDIC leaders have led the development of interdisciplinary competencies for school mental health professionals (Ball et al., 2010), school mental health competencies for educators (Weston et al., 2008), and interdisciplinary team collaboration (Mellin, Bronstein, Anderson-Butcher, Ball, & Green, 2010). These competencies are intended to promote ESMH and inform professional preparation and continuing education for those working in school-linked and -based services.

Second, MHEDIC leaders are using these competencies to develop training and professional development experiences for individuals across professions working in ESMH. For instance, there currently is a project underway at the Center for School Mental Health (CSMH) at the University of Maryland specifically pertaining to this goal. Additionally, MHEDIC leaders wrote a policy report on school mental health

workforce issues for the Annapolis Coalition on Behavioral Health Workforce (see Paternite, Weist, Axelrod, Anderson-Butcher, & Weston, 2006). This document was used to inform policy and practices nationally related to workforce preparation in adult, and child and adolescent and school mental health services.

Third, MHEDIC prioritizes research on the quality implementation of school mental health practices and outcome measures indicating practice effectiveness, efficiency, and fidelity. Many MHEDIC members are leading research published in their own disciplines (such as Children & Schools, Psychology in the Schools, etc.), as well as across disciplines in publications such as School Mental Health, and Advances in School Mental Health Promotion. Members also present research and evidence-based practices at key discipline specific national conferences (such as the Society for Social Work Research and the American Educational Research Association) and in interdisciplinary national outlets (such as the annual National Conference on Advancing School Mental Health organized by the CSMH, see <http://csmh.umaryland.edu>). Several federal grants have been awarded to MHEDIC members in conducting this work.

Fourth, MHEDIC has a targeted agenda related to engaging graduate students across disciplines working with university faculty. Of particular interest is the emergent priority related to interprofessional practice and pre-service preparation in institutions of higher education. One example comes from Ohio State University's LiFE Sports Initiative, where leaders in the four Colleges of Social Work; Education and Human Ecology; Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences; and Arts and Sciences collaborated to establish an interdisciplinary undergraduate minor

in Youth Development to enhance student learning across disciplines in areas such as child development, risk and protective factors, and related evidence-based practices.

The Value of the MHEDIC CoP

These aforementioned activities and priorities showcase the multiple ways in which the MHEDIC community has impacted the field of ESMH, and at one point around 2005, a "MHEDIC vita" documented over 100 collaborative professional presentations, and 30 publications of members. Another measure of success within MHEDIC involves the concept of "voting with your feet." The past three MHEDIC meetings have been attended by over 40 people. Members continue to attend MHEDIC meetings and engage in MHEDIC-related projects because of the personal and professional value of this work.

Hung, Gaffney, Maras, Bernstein, & Flaspohler (2010) documented small wins, nuggets, or "aha moments" (see Flaspohler, Duffy, Wandersman, Stillman, & Maras, 2008) through a recent empowerment-oriented evaluation. Seventeen past and current MHEDIC members reported unexpected outcomes associated with participation in MHEDIC. Foremost, members report that MHEDIC participation resulted in the formation of new collaborations with people across disciplines and fields. Participants mention receiving guidance, support, and consultation from other members of MHEDIC. They often consult with each other as they move forward with new projects; solicit and receive feedback from others about methodologies, research designs, and practice models; and socialize with each other outside of professional settings.

Additionally, members indicate that they learn new knowledge and strategies at MHEDIC meetings (which are in turn taken back to local contexts and incorporated into

practice or research). In the case of university members and graduate students, improvements in training and preparation have been noted. MHEDIC participants also report an increased awareness of broader ESMH priorities and interdisciplinary partnership needs in the field. This in turn reportedly results in improved research designs, policies, teaching and instruction, and practice.

As in the example of the "MHEDIC Vita," many members engage in collaborative research together. As such, participants report that their involvement in MHEDIC has resulted in the generation of new knowledge related to ESMH, much of which has been through formal publications, presentations, and other dissemination outlets.

Conclusion

There is a growing need for collaboration and partnership to address the multiple needs youth bring with them to school today. New partnership-centered designs encourage collaborations among schools, families, and the community. These designs require new skills and competencies for those working in and with schools. ESMH is one particular partnership-centered model of growing importance. MHEDIC was created to enhance workforce preparation within ESMH. As a CoP, MHEDIC organizes individuals across professions and disciplines to focus on improving ESMH research, teaching, policy, and practice. Multiple benefits have occurred, as documented here, which give credence to the power of a CoP and the collective synergy occurring within the Mental Health-Education Integration Consortium.



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Special Section

Gloria Levin's Living Community Psychology column is on hiatus and will return in the Winter 2012 issue. She kindly agreed to allow us to present a "mini-version" of her column, featuring one of the great leaders in community psychology – Clifford O'Donnell – who retired after four decades with the University of Hawai'i at Manoa's Department of Psychology (Cliff was our Program Director and Founder of our Community and Culture Concentration specialty).

—Maria Chun



Clifford O'Donnell,
University of Hawai'i at Manoa

1. How long were you employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH)? What factors impacted your decision to move to Hawai'i?

My employment began at UH in 1970 and continued for 40 years. I moved to Hawai'i to accept a tenure-track appointment in clinical with the Department of Psychology, that also included a joint appointment with a UH research center. When I applied for the position, Roland Tharp was the new director of the clinical program. We exchanged several letters over a few months discussing the position, my interests, and my research plans. Of course, I was also applying for other positions.

Late one Friday afternoon, I completed an interview at an East Coast university and was offered the position. I agreed to let them know on Monday. However, while I was in the

Chair's office, I received a message to return a call from Roland. When the faculty took me to dinner, I returned his call from the pay phone in the restaurant. He invited me to come to UH for an interview. I explained that I just received an offer and had to decide by Monday. He suggested we interview right then over the phone. So my employment interview was conducted from a phone booth. He then shared the information with his colleagues and called me on Monday with an offer. I accepted.

It sounds so archaic now, letter exchanges instead of e-mail, pay phones instead of cell phones. The process was cumbersome, but it all worked out. I thought I would stay in Hawai'i for two to three years and then go to where I wanted to stay. After two years, I realized I was where I wanted to stay. For me, it is still the best place in the World to be.

2. How did you first learn of community psychology? When did you start referring to yourself as a community psychologist?

As a graduate student in clinical, we had a practicum in a community mental health center. The year before my graduation, a community faculty member was hired in the clinical program and I had my first course in community. At the time, the definition of clinical was broader. Clinical included a wide range of practices from individual to community. It wasn't until the 1980s, with third-party insurance payments, that clinical became more defined by individual assessment and treatment.

The clinical program at UH had a required community seminar from its beginning in 1969. When I joined in 1970, I added a community practicum and my students joined me in community-based research. Several of my early 1970's publications were in the *Journal of Community Psychology* and the *American Journal of Community Psychology*. So my identity

with community was there from the start, but community was integrated with clinical psychology.

3. How long have you been involved with SCRA? What are some highlights of your presidency?

My active involvement began when I joined the Council of Program Directors in Community Research and Action in 1983, participated in the first biennial in 1987, and served two years as Chair of the Council in the 1990s. In 2003, I was honored to be elected SCRA President and served on the Executive Committee 2003 to 2006.

On a personal note, the highlight was working with so many SCRA members on the committees, task forces, and interest groups. SCRA members are dedicated professionals and an inspiration to all who are fortunate to collaborate with them. Professionally, this collaboration with so many led to these highlights:

- A. The reactivation of the Council of Program Directors in Community Research and Action under its new name, the SCRA Council of Education Programs. Greg Meissen was especially helpful by serving as Acting Chair and conducting elections for the Council. The vitality of the Council is essential to the future of SCRA through its support of education programs that enroll our students;
- B. The development of initiatives for our members to use their expertise to increase the influence of our values on public policy. Among these initiatives was the creation of a new Award for Contributions to Public Policy. Lenny Jason became the first recipient in 2007;
- C. The introduction of a new, interactive SCRA Web site. Scot Evans contributed his expertise to develop the site;

D. Participation on the APA Council of Chairs of Training Chairs (CCTC) to obtain their approval for community psychology experiences to count toward clinical practicum and internship hours for students;

E. Building on the work of Paul Toro to facilitate the participation of international members in SCRA. Several SCRA members participated in the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology Conference (IACCP) in 2006 and invited their members to our biennial in 2007. About 12 members of IACCP accepted our invitation. In addition, Irma Serrano-Garcia and her colleagues were instrumental in organizing the First International Conference on Community Psychology in Puerto Rico in 2006;

F. The visioning process initiated by Tom Wolff for the 2005 Biennial. The idea was to create a vision for the next 40 years of community research and action. Many ideas were developed and discussed in TCP in 2006. Among the important developments was the activation of the Community Psychology Practice Group; and

G. Building on the work of so many before to advocate a Cultural Community Psychology in my presidential address (O'Donnell, 2006). I was pleased to see a special issue on the topic in the March issue of AJCP this year, and have contributed a theoretical article on integrating cultural community psychology (O'Donnell & Tharp, in press).

4. When did you first decide to create the first community psychology program in Hawai'i?

Soon after the APA accreditation site visit for our clinical program in 1982. The site visit was a strange experience.

We now had three required community courses and called our program Clinical and Community Psychology. The site visitors praised our community focus, but required us to increase direct clinical practicum hours with individuals and remove community from the name of our program. Our world had changed. The definition of clinical had narrowed to a more individual focus. We were the same people and were complimented for our work, but the tectonic plate had shifted in psychology. Our choice was to shift with it or create a separate program. If we removed community from the name of our program, we wouldn't attract as many students with our interests. Also, the increase in clinical individual hours meant a decrease in our community requirements. The choice was clear. Roland Tharp, Gil Tanabe, and I proposed, and the Department subsequently approved, a separate program in community psychology. I was selected to be its first director.

Ironically, APA has since increased the flexibility of clinical accreditation requirements. Clinical programs are now encouraged to broaden their range beyond the traditional assessment and therapy of individuals. The beat of the drum has changed to expand the employability of clinical graduates. However, the difficulty of including a rich community curriculum within a clinical program remains.

5. Can you describe how the community psychology program has evolved over the years?

Several innovative features of the program evolved over the years, including practicum experience in interdisciplinary teams, equal emphasis on qualitative and quantitative methodologies in course requirements, research projects, and practice, and interdisciplinary Certificate options, each requiring 15

graduate credits with a community practicum. The Certificate choices include Conflict Resolution, Disability Studies, Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance, Planning Studies, and Policy Studies. However, the central innovation is the systematic integration of community and cultural psychology within a single program. That led to our APA Award for Innovation in Graduate Education. Although we always had a cultural focus, changing our name to Community and Cultural Psychology was important in communicating our identity and attracting wonderfully diverse students.

6. What is your proudest accomplishment as the Program Director?

Building a strong, viable graduate program with my colleagues. Many attempted to discourage us from creating a program that was separate from clinical, believing that we wouldn't attract excellent students or be able to conduct our research outside of clinical settings. They were wrong. Academically, our students are among the very best, not only in the Department but in the University. We love the diversity of their interests and the intellectual excitement of their research. When the World is your lab, you don't have to depend on just clinical settings. Excellent examples are Kati Corlew's dissertation on the effects of climate change in Tuvalu, and the masters theses of Sherri Brokopp Binder and Katie McGeehan on the social effects of the tsunami in Samoa.

7. How would you describe the future of community psychology as a profession?

Exciting! With over half of the professionals in community psychology living and working outside of the United States, the field is growing internationally and culturally. Within SCRA, the Practice Group is leading the way to new opportunities. Certainly there is a great need in the

World for a field with the values and expertise of community psychology. With collaboration in participant-practitioner-researcher partnerships, we can all contribute to that future. I look forward to it.

8. Why did you decide to retire?

I don't think of myself as retired. Rather, my position changed from Professor to Professor Emeritus. I'm still working with my students and writing. I don't have a teaching schedule or attend as many meetings, so my new position allows me to catch up on my backlog of writing. If only Roland had offered this position when I was in the phone booth over 40 years ago.

Instead it took the ratification of the new 6-year faculty contract last year to get me to consider changing my position to Emeritus. When I ran the numbers it made sense for me financially, so I talked with our Department Chair and College Dean to be sure our community program would keep my position. Confident with their assurances, we then received the unanimous approval of the faculty to recruit my replacement in Community and Cultural Psychology. Either they wanted to be sure I would retire or they wanted to maintain the viability of our program. I prefer the latter interpretation. When Charlene Baker agreed to be the new Director, I knew the program would be in good hands and went ahead with my plans.

9. How are you spending your retirement?

Working every day. I've only been in my new position for 6 months, so it's not time yet to take off. I just submitted a manuscript for publication with one of my students, Izaak Williams. It is a 35-year follow-up of a youth mentoring program I developed with my colleagues in the early 1970s, the Buddy System. It feels like I've come full circle.

With a more flexible schedule I

also have more time for my hobby, cooking. The aromas of Thai, Indian, or Italian dishes refresh my spirit each day. On occasion, I indulge my desire for fresh-baked fruit pies. Life is good.

10. Would you like to share any words of wisdom with your SCRA colleagues and future community psychologists?

They know more than I do about what is best for them and I have great confidence in their ability to create a future we can't even imagine today. My only suggestion is that they keep their data. They shouldn't let IRBs force them to destroy their data after their studies and community projects are completed. Instead, they should explain to their IRBs that they plan to follow-up with longitudinal studies and will keep their data secure, and apply to the IRB when they plan to contact their participants again. Younger colleagues especially have the opportunity for long-term follow-ups of their work.

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Student Issues

Edited by Todd Bottom

New National Student Representative

In July, we held a student election to replace outgoing National Student Representative (NSR) Lindsey Zimmerman of Georgia State University. We are happy to announce that Jesica Siham Fernández from the University of California at Santa Cruz was confirmed to serve a two-year term as NSR. Jesica's brief bio is below. Although we will miss Lindsey's ongoing contributions to students and SCRA in an official capacity, we also look forward the ideas and initiatives that Jesica will offer to Division 27.



New NSR Jesica Siham Fernández

My name is Jesica Siham Fernández, and I am entering my fourth year as a social psychology doctoral student at the University of California,

Santa Cruz. I completed my B.A. in Psychology and M.A. in Social Psychology from the same institution, and I am currently working toward my Ph.D. in Social-Community Psychology, with a Degree Emphasis in Latin American and Latino Studies.

I was born in the southwestern state of Michoacán, in the city of Morelia, and raised in the Central Valley of California. My parents were migrant farm workers. Part of the year was spent in the farms and fields of the valley picking crops while I attended an underfunded bilingual public school on the other side of town, and the remaining time was spent in a small village, twenty miles outside of Morelia. My parents and I were

residents - visitors that came to work for a few month out of the year, and then return to Mexico. In 1995, at the outset of the North American Fair Trade Agreement (NAFTA), my parents lost their small farm in Morelia and we immigrated to the United States to stay and build a future. Our lives were shaped by our culture, values, traditions and customs from Mexico, and the capitalist economy of the United States. My transnational upbringing prepared my younger siblings and me with educational opportunities and hopes of a better future.

My research interests and academic development is strongly tied to my own personal experiences as a woman of color, and as a woman raised in a working-class family, culturally and linguistically othered. My personal life experiences can relate to the lives of many others; however, there is one similarity that brings us together, and that is the love and the passion toward social justice and the building of a better future for generations to come.

My personal experience as a first-generation immigrant, and first in my family to graduate from an institution of higher learning, together with the challenges and opportunities for academic pursuits and community civic engagement, influenced my interests in social justice regarding immigration, citizenship, Latinos and education. I am interested in how social settings, like communities and schools, can support civic engagement for social justice and change. My feminist Mexican-American upbringing instilled in me the principles of justice, commitment, and discipline, but above all, selflessness and humility.

For the past four years I have been an active community volunteer at the Live Oak community. Live Oak is located in an unincorporated region between the cities of Santa Cruz and Capitola. It is an area that is over-populated, lacking many basic

resources (e.g., health clinics, public safety, schools), with a high number of predominantly Latino families, mostly living below the poverty line. My involvement has been at the Live Oak Family Resource Center (LOFRC; a non-profit community center dedicated to promoting a healthy community and strengthening the individuals and families of Live Oak) and at Live Oak Elementary School, where I oversee an after-school program (for 4th and 5th grade students, who are predominantly first and second generation immigrant Latinos) that follows a participatory action research approach.

In the youth PAR project, a team of research assistants and I work in collaboration with the students on making positive changes in their school by teaching them about social science research - how data is collected and analyzed, and how results are used to inform decision making and social change. In this program, the goal is to facilitate Latino children's civic learning and civic engagement, through community-based research projects (like making murals) oriented to help them gain a sense of belonging and the agency to improve their school and community. Recently the mural, titled "We Are Powerful," was awarded the 2011 Santa Cruz Gold Awards: Arts & Culture BEST Mural/ Public Art. The students who created the mural, as part of their action in the PAR project are currently working on a book about their mural making process. My involvement in the Live Oak community, as a volunteer, community member and researcher has allowed me to build relationships and a sense of commitment to provide the Latino community with opportunities to become civically engaged and have a voice in their community.

My current research, titled "Latino Children's Civic Engagement, Civic Identity and Civic Learning in After-School Programs: Exploring

Citizenship among Latino Children," centers on examining how academic institutions, like schools, facilitate and support opportunities for Latino children to move from a place of invisibility to a place of visibility via civic engagement, despite the civic identity and citizenship challenges that Latino children and youth experience. Thus, my research interests are on Latino youth civic engagement and how schools serve as mediating structures toward citizenship and cultural citizenship formation. Part of my research at Live Oak Elementary School is on examining the dynamics among the students when conversations around immigration, citizenship and education rights, to name a few, are discussed, and how students begin to see themselves as change agents in their knowledge production and understanding of social problems.

Currently, I am working on writing a theoretical paper integrating some of the literature on "Children and Youth Civic Engagement," "Schools as Mediating Structures," and "Citizenship and Cultural Citizenship." Also, I am supervising a summer program at Live Oak Elementary School, where the students are planning for the making of a future mural that will incorporate the stories and voices of people from the community around themes, such as relational power, communities supporting each other, coming together to build resources, and cultural representation. Together, both the theoretical paper and the youth PAR project at Live Oak Elementary School, compliment, support and motivate my interests in Latino youth, education, civic engagement and citizenship. Given the significant appreciation and value I have for the youth and community with whom I work, I am humbled to be able to share with you who I am, in hopes that you will find your passion lying within your personal experiences.

Student Presentations at the 2011 APA Convention

Several SCRA student members attended the 2011 APA Convention in Washington, D.C. in August. We appreciate all of the hard work and dedication to the research and Division 27 values that are important to each student. Congratulations to all students who lead presentations at APA, including:

- Chris Kirk from Wichita State presented a poster titled Sense of Community on an Urban, Commuter Campus: A Mixed-Methods Person-Centered Analysis of Social Connection and Health; and
- Lindsey Zimmerman from Georgia State presented data about The Impact of Motherhood and Reasons for Living and Suicidality.

The Community Student

Edited by Todd Bottom and Jessica Fernandez

Student- to-Student Collaborations

Written by Katherine Cloutier, Michigan State University

As students in community psychology we are continuously taught about the importance of collaboration, however, student to student collaboration sometimes gets lost in the mix. In an attempt to re-establish our value of collaboration as budding community psychologists, our second year cohort at Michigan State University decided to put together a hopeful publication outlining one of the most important lessons learned during our first year: praxis.

Our first years' curriculum had successfully embedded the values of community psychology into us all; however putting those values in

action was another issue. What does empowerment actually look like? Can you empower someone? How are power dynamics embedded in community-university partnerships? How can we change these power systems in order to create a mutual benefit relationship? As we learned more about the practice of community psychology, we had many more questions like these to ask ourselves. Thankfully as first year grad students we were enrolled in a practicum course where these questions were frequently being put to the test. During our second semester of practicum the classroom had transformed to be a setting of mutual learning; of understanding how to negotiate our roles as psychologists in the community. We all had similar, but different paths to developing our own "ecological identity" as Kelly had taught us (Kelly, 1971).

To aid in our development of an ecological perspective, we had articles such as The spirit of ecological inquiry by Ryserson-Espino and Trickett (2008), An interactive and contextual model of community-university collaborations by Suarez-Balcazar, Harper, and Lewis (2005), Review of community-based research by Israel, Schulz, Parker, and Becker (1998), and multiple articles and book chapters by Kelly (1968, 1970, 1971, 1979). But as fledgling students in the field, we also had created something more to add to these 'how to' guides. Through the means of thematic grouping, our cohort of five students had narrowed down each of our most significant struggles during the past year while establishing independent community-university partnerships for our own practicum projects. Through sharing each of our biggest obstacles we all learned something new about developing an ecological identity, and negotiating our place in the community.

These lessons learned are currently being put together for a publication

submission. Disseminating our processes as new graduate students, and demonstrating the benefit of collaborative creations among students will hopefully encourage future student to student collaborations. Additionally, praxis is a central component to community psychology, and creating additional venues through which we can learn how to achieve praxis can only benefit the field, as well as other community psychologists. This intended publication will highlight obstacles in the community-university partnership development, such as multiple/conflicting perspectives within a community partner, lack of an established social network within

Disseminating our processes as new graduate students and demonstrating the benefit of collaborative creations among students will hopefully encourage future student to student collaborations

a community partner, protected environments/populations accessed through community partners, and a lack of resources within a community partner; as well as how we can incorporate theory into action to overcome these obstacles in a mutually beneficial way. As a cohort we may also consider presenting some of this collaborative effort at the Midwest Eco Conference Fall, 2011.



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Oxford Houses in Bulgaria: An Excursion in International Community Psychology

Written by Ron Harvey,
DePaul University

This paper describes an independent field project to assess the feasibility for creating substance abuse aftercare homes in Bulgaria based on the Oxford House (OH) model. I hope to convince you that community psychology research on a well-known subject in an international setting can be an effective way to expose the hidden contexts of what you think

you know.

Oxford Houses are resident-run, self-financed recovery homes based on self-help principles and operate democratically. Over 10,000 people live in over 1,400 OHs in the U.S., Canada, and Australia (Oxford House, Inc, 2009). Each OH is a rented property in which expenses and chores are shared equally among residents. Residents may live in an Oxford House as long as they wish, but only if they abstain from using alcohol or illicit drugs. To date, DePaul researchers have conducted five NIH-funded studies, which have revealed much about the structure, residents, and effectiveness of the OH model. The experience of group living and mutual dependence has shown to increase mutual-help participation and increased social support among OH residents. These studies report OH's two-year sobriety rates of 87% compared to 45% for usual treatment (Jason, Davis, & Ferrari, 2007).

In 2007, I planned a summer trip to Bulgaria and my advisor, Leonard Jason, put me in contact with an National Institutes of Health (NIH) program officer who had recently worked with the Bulgarian government as a consultant on substance abuse treatment. My NIH contact put me in touch with his contacts in Bulgaria, and he stated that he thought Oxford Houses were “a natural for Eastern Europe.” I was intrigued by this statement, but I had my doubts; in former Communist countries I visited (25 to date), most people live in vast high-rise housing complexes of two or three rooms; not enough for a typical OH, which usually house 7 to 12 residents. Already, the importance of context!

While in Sofia, Bulgaria's capitol and largest city, I met with professionals in the substance abuse treatment field and with government health officials. Naturally, we discussed the issues concerning substance abuse treatment, housing, and aftercare in Bulgaria and the U.S., as well as DePaul's Oxford House research. As in the U.S., there are two significant risk factors leading to substance abuse relapse

in Bulgaria: returning to pro-using neighborhoods and a lack of housing and social environments supportive of abstinence. I asked my new collaborators, “Do you think Oxford Houses could work in Bulgaria?” I was told, “Bulgaria has nothing like Oxford Houses, though we certainly need them. Over 70% of substance abusers return for treatment.” “The government has no money for such programs.” “We don't know if people would want to live in a group in an Oxford House.” “The odds are 50/50 whether such a program could work in Bulgaria.” In a country of 8 million people, only six residential therapeutic communities (TC) offer substance abuse treatment services, and only around 1,800 people seek treatment each year, partially because of the limited number of facilities that only offer detoxification (EMCDDA, 2009).

It was far from clear whether OHs were a feasible aftercare option in a Bulgarian context. Regardless of location, OHs require, at minimum, five underlying social, cultural, and infrastructural “ingredients”: 1) appropriate rental settings; 2) residents willing to live together and follow the OH principles; 3) opportunities for OH residents for work, gain income, training, and/or continuing education; 4) institutional and legal support from governmental and treatment professionals; and, 5) acceptance from the local community. These supports are present in the U.S. although often taken for granted. Housing markets and a large middle class create a large number of rental homes available to house 7 to 12 OH residents. Additionally, recovering individuals in the U.S. are protected from discrimination in jobs and housing by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. In the U.S., self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous are plentiful and culturally mainstream.

To determine whether OH could even be created in Bulgaria, I conducted a needs assessment and a feasibility study in Bulgaria during my third year of graduate studies on a Fulbright U.S. Student grant

in 2009 to 2010. My sponsors and collaborators in Bulgaria were absolutely essential to the project, and I wish to thank, Dr. Sveta Raycheva, director of the National Center for Addictions (part of the Ministry of Health) and the staff at Sofia Municipal Centre for Addictions. In addition, I was fortunate to meet with staff and establish a collaborative relationship with Phoenix House, the first Bulgarian TC for recovering substance abusers. I met with 40 Phoenix House clients in treatment to talk about their plans after leaving Phoenix TC, and to ask their opinions of the Oxford House model, most importantly, whether or not they would be interested in living in such a home. These focus groups revealed that 75 percent of the Phoenix House residents had no place to live after their treatment had ended, and that 67 percent would be interested in living in a communal setting with other recovering peers. I learned

I learned that the context for sobriety support between the U.S. and Bulgaria were many

that the context for sobriety support between the U.S. and Bulgaria were many. As an illustration, over 4,000 Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings are held each week in the Chicago metropolitan area (Chicago Area Service Office, 2011). In Sofia, a city of similar size to Chicago, there are only five AA meetings per week.

In sum, my findings indicated that four of five ingredients for starting an OH appear obtainable in Bulgaria, but not without some creativity. Flats could be combined to produce larger rental units, or renting a block of flats might also be possible. Most Phoenix House residents would be willing to try living in an OH, but as former addicts, they expected to be discriminated against when seeking employment. My collaborators suggested establishing mutually beneficial employment contracts

near an OH location. My contacts in the Bulgarian government and legal system indicate that there are currently no legal restrictions for creating OHs, although such homes are not currently protected.


This brings up the fifth and thorniest ingredient: community support. My experience talking to everyday Bulgarians indicated a negative opinion towards ex-addicts and NIMBY (not in my back yard) attitudes are common. Discrimination and stigmatization of people with a history of substance abuse is common in Eastern Europe (Broekaert, Colpaert, Soye, Vanderplasschen, & Vandeveld, 2007; Room, 1998; Roth, 2009; Toteva, 1998). If OH were implemented in Bulgaria, I would most depend on and defer to my Bulgarian collaborators' advice to quietly and judiciously share the project's goals with neighbors and to work towards gradual community acceptance over time.

My experience in Bulgaria was a wonderful and highly informative experience. I wish to thank the psychology department at DePaul who were completely supportive and allowed me to continue my graduate work whilst in Bulgaria. I am now a committed international community psychologist (in training)! I am currently applying for NIH research and philanthropic funding for a pilot project to implement Oxford Houses in Bulgaria and to study their efficacy and sustainability.

For me, international community research is analogous to asking a fish to describe what it was like to be a fish. The fish would say lots of things, but probably not that they are wet all the time. Doing work in Bulgaria revealed the "hidden" contexts that support the Oxford House system in the U.S.



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